

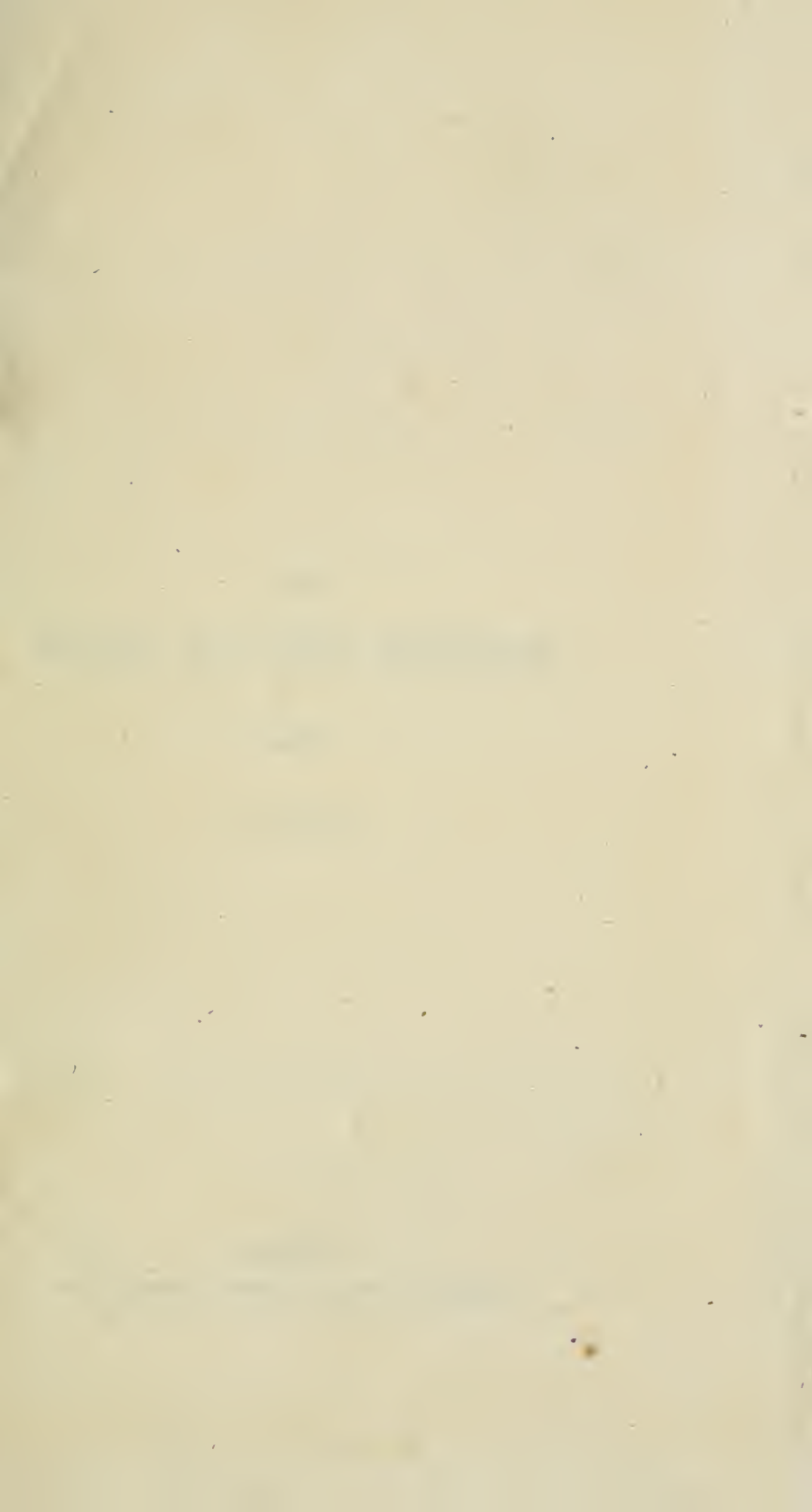
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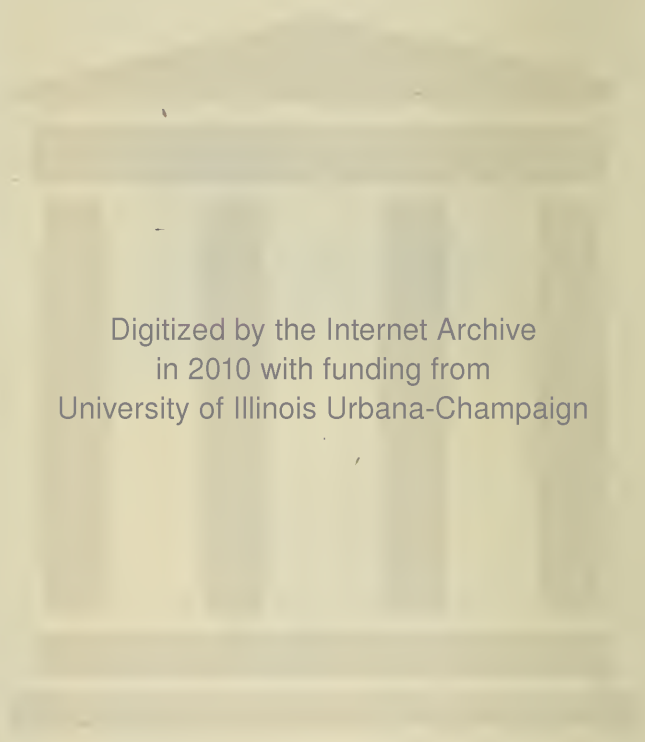
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THE
NUNS OF THE DESERT.

A NOVEL.

~~W. H. LANE~~
LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

Olivia Giffard
THE *(Verquies Flintshire)*
NUNS OF THE DESERT;

OR,

THE WOODLAND WITCHES.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY EUGENIA DE ACTON.

AUTHOR OF

ESSAYS ON THE ART OF BEING HAPPY; A TALE WITHOUT
A TITLE, &c.

VOL. II.

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LEADENHALL-STREET.
1805.

1907

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THE
NUNS OF THE DESERT.



CHAP. I.

*Mr. Veerman's Confession continued.—The Birth
of Selina Rosemont —Further Atrocity
of the Selwyns.*

“THE distress of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim for their darling, their only child, may more easily be imagined than described. It was this circumstance, when subsequently related to me, that first struck me with remorse. The beauty and innocence of the child awakened my sensibility, and almost determined me to return, and restore it to its parents; but shame for the part I had

acted—a wish to secure a handsome provision for life—*some* portion of reluctance to expose Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn—the solemn oath of secrecy which had been exacted from me, previous to my being made the confidant of their design—all which, to say nothing of the pride of being deemed a clever fellow, to execute a plot, reinforced by the consideration that I could at *any* time repair the mischief I had occasioned, confirmed my previous resolution to persevere in what I am now awakened to see was a truly diabolical proceeding.

“ Seated in the chaise with my lovely little charge, who had not suffered any inconvenience but fright, I was rapidly driven by my employer through the forest into the London road; and it being now almost dark, we proceeded without fear of interruption, till we reached a cottage, about a mile sideways of Marston.

“ The child had by this time cried itself to sleep, and lay quiet upon the seat of the chaise while, to render our situation less
suspicious,

suspicious, I attired myself in the dress of a female servant, which Mrs. Selwyn had previously provided. We then proceeded to the cottage, under pretence of my being taken suddenly ill; and giving the good woman who lived there, a handsome gratuity, I passed the night in that place with the little Aurora, while Mr. Selwyn drove to Marston; from whence, after stopping to refresh the horses, he set off for Ivetsey by a different road, and was met at an inn, near Longford, by Mrs. Selwyn, who sending back her carriage, returned with her husband to the Tower; and no suspicion respecting the child's not having been accidentally and actually drowned, ever arose in the breast of any individual.

“As soon as I awoke in the morning, the chaise which Mr. Selwyn had ordered from the next town, was at the door of the cottage; from whence I conveyed Miss Blenheim, who, though she was the sweetest tempered and the most lively child in the universe, cried incessantly, immediately

to the metropolis; where, having procured a nurse, and all other things necessary for the orphan, as it might too justly be termed, I waited in a retired lodging, the arrival of my employers.

“ It would not answer any material purpose, to descant upon the frequent disappointments we encountered, ere we could settle a plan for the future situation of Miss Blenheim. At length, I went down into the country to visit my father and mother, who having formerly been in a decent and comfortable way of life, were the more keenly alive to some late adverse strokes of fortune, which had reduced them from a competence to almost necessity; but they still kept up the appearance of people of some property.

“ Just before I reached their habitation, which was in a sequestered country, an incident of an extraordinary nature had occurred, which occasioned much wondering to both, and a new employment for my mother.

“ Sitting

“ Sitting one Sunday evening at the door of their cottage, they were alarmed by the piercing cries of a woman ; upon which, my father started up, and ran directly to the point from whence the noise seemed to proceed, where he found a beautiful young creature screaming after a man on horseback with a pillion behind him, galloping at a distance, and just out of sight.

‘ Oh, save me ! save me ! ’ cried she, wringing her hands in agony, as my father approached her ; ‘ save a wretched creature, whose death will soon end her troubles ; save her from committing double murder ! ’ and sank at his feet.

“ I mean not to describe the dreadful scene which ensued. It is sufficient for my purpose to relate that my father conveyed the distressed lady to his house, where, in two days, she was delivered of a daughter, whom she ordered to be named Selina Rosemont ; and in a few hours after, resigned her breath without one struggle. Both my father and mother were

distressed respecting the child, as their circumstances were too narrow to allow of extra expence. The lady, just before she expired, called them to the side of her bed, and asking them to be seated, told them that she was the daughter of a Clergyman; that she had been privately married to the son of a nobleman, who, under pretence of conveying her to a house of his in a distant country, had put her into a carriage with one of his servants, who, at the turning of a road, through which the chaise could not be drawn, had provided a man with a horse and pillion to meet them; when sending the man back in the chaise, he took the lady behind him, and carrying her through several cross roads and by-lanes, persuaded her to alight at the place where my father found her, under pretence of the horse's having gathered a stone into his foot; after which, he instantly remounted, and galloped off, as I have related; but before he left her, put a pocket-book into her hand, which
he

he told her his master had ordered him to present to her.—‘ In this book,’ continued she, in a voice which could now scarcely be heard, ‘ you will find the pretended motive ; for that it is pretended I am now convinced, for my being thus disposed of. But while I am speaking, I find my existence is drawing to its period ; give me therefore a pen and ink, that with my dying hand I may write my own family name, and that of my poor baby’s father. Let him have a letter sent according to a direction I will give you, as soon as I am released ;’ whereupon, raising herself, by my mother’s assistance, up in the bed, with an exertion of strength, to perform this last duty to her child, the writing implements were laid before her ; but the effort was fatal : her head sank upon the bosom of my mother, and she breathed no more.”

Selina, though both she and our *ci-devant* Lavinia had been made acquainted with
B 4 their

their origin, as soon after their return from Ivy Tower to the Nunnery, as the restoration of intellect to the afflicted fair one last named, rendered the communication eligible, yet Selina was so much affected by this more minute relation of the misfortunes of her mother, that she begged Mr. Veerman to suspend reading till she should recover her spirits by walking into the fresh air.

Her request was instantly complied with. Miss Blenheim, no more Miss Rosemont, attended her into the garden ; and at their return, Mr. Veerman proceeded with what he intended to deposit upon oath the next day.

“ My father and mother were greatly affected by the death of their distressed inmate. What to do with the baby, they could not determine, nor how to bury the deceased.

“ At length, my mother proposed an
examination

examination of the pocket-book to which the poor lady had referred; observing, that it might afford instructions how to proceed.

‘Right,’ said my father, as my mother put the book into his hand; when upon opening the fold, the letter presented itself, and my father read it aloud.

“The contents were completely artful but the lady too well knew the writer to be deceived. She was convinced it was his intention to disown her, in order to be married to a woman of quality and fortune: but there was no direction to him, nor did he subscribe any name but that of ‘*your Henry*,’ addressing her by the appellation of Selina, which, by the manner of its being used, appeared to have been assumed.

“Examining the partitions of the pocket-book, they discovered bank-notes to the amount of five hundred pounds, which had been enclosed in the letter as an equivalent for forfeited engagements of the

most solemn nature. Upon the cover on which these were now folded, the lady had written—*‘For the use of my child, which will soon be motherless.’*

“Proceedings were now soon resolved upon. The lady was buried, and the child properly clothed.

“When I understood these particulars, I immediately formed my plan; which was, that the little Aurora Blenheim should be carried to my father’s, and brought up as Lavinia Rosemont, elder sister of Selina, whose mother, it was to be given out, was a distant relation of our family. With this regulation, Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn were perfectly pleased; and my mother nursed the two young ladies, believing my report of Miss Blenheim’s being, what in that country is denominated, a love-child.

“Upwards of seven years passed without any extraordinary occurrence in our history. My mother was well paid for her trouble, and was fond of her little charges, who conceived an extraordinary attachment

for each other, and were taught to believe themselves sisters.

“ It was the wish of both Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, that Miss Blenheim should be educated as a common servant—not taught even to write or read; but this I strenuously opposed: and now having them both in some measure under controul, I gained my point in having her taught the rudiments of useful learning. For this resolution, I cannot boast any purity of motive. My view respected my own future interest; for as I still determined, should I find it most beneficial, to restore Miss Blenheim to her parents, I considered her appearance would not be very gratifying to persons in their situation, were she not qualified to shine in such a sphere. The time was to come, and I hope is now arrived, in which rectitude would be the governing principle of my actions.

“ During the period of Miss Blenheim’s living at the house of my father, I chiefly resided in the metropolis, where I endeavoured

voured to supply what I deemed the deficiencies of my early education, by putting myself, at the expence of Mr. Selwyn, whose purse I did not spare, under the hands of several masters; and being earnestly desirous of learning, did not draw much heavy censure upon myself from my tutors: but unhappily I became acquainted with a set of young men, who gloried in the distinction of REASONERS, and who, in fact, reasoned themselves out of every principle that could promote the happiness of society.

“ The present moment, they said, was all that a man could call his own; that, therefore, the necessities—the gratification of that moment were all that was requisite for him to attend to; applying, in a perverted sense, a text of that Scripture which, notwithstanding, they inconsistently disowned—‘ Take no thought for the morrow, &c.’

“ Happy period! blessed event! which shewed to me the mild radiance of
Gospel

Gospel truth ; which taught me that to know felicity myself, I must seek that of others ; which convinced me that virtue was more than a name, and piety more than a shadow. I am now, I thank the SUPREME, a CHRISTIAN ; and under that profession, I hope to act according to its dictates, without view to either fee or reward : thankful shall I be, if my present and future conduct be deemed an equivalent for my past misdeeds.

“ During my residence in London, I caught the small-pox, which distemper so totally altered my features and complexion, that it was impossible for any one who had known me formerly, to have recognised me under my appearance, after a recovery which was long deemed doubtful. To aid the deception, I was grown considerably taller than when I lived at Ivetsey ; my face, which had been short and broad, was then long and thin ; my hair changed from flaxen to auburn ; the high glow of health, which used to bloom in my cheeks, was faded ;

faded; my speech and method of talking totally altered; and my dress as different as if I had removed to another nation.

“ Mr. Selwyn, who had by this time changed all his servants, was not now afraid to have me frequently at his house. When he resided at London, I lived with him entirely—sinking the name of Donald Veerman into that of Robert Smith.

“ Necessarily in the confidence of his deepest concerns, which he had no reason to suspect I should ever betray, Mr. Selwyn trusted me in some other affairs, which were of a tendency almost as atrocious as the circumstance I have related; and which, after the best advice and most mature deliberation, I have judged it to be my indispensable duty to reveal upon a most solemn oath, that right may take place of wrong.

“ A half-sister of Mr. Selwyn's, whose name was Congreve, died several years since, in Ireland; leaving her twin sons, Ferdinand and Horatio, to the guardianship of Mr. Selwyn, whose natively avaricious
temper,

temper, increased by the still more selfish one of his Lady, instantly conceived a design of securing to himself and his son the estate of the orphan brothers; to facilitate which, a mortgage, bearing the date of many years back, was forged by Mr. Selwyn himself, to my supposed father, *Daniel Smith, merchant, of London*; which, with notes and bonds to the fraudulent guardian and others, bills to tradesmen never owed, and various expences never accumulated, so divided the property, that instead of a large, free, and unencumbered estate, the heirs of Mrs. Congreve will probably be brought in debtors to Mr. Selwyn's care and kindness.

“ Another fraud which this gentleman meditated, and as far as the business has been settled, executed, was respecting a legacy which had been left by a lady of the name of Marchmont, distantly related to Mrs. Selwyn, of ten thousand pounds to each of her daughters, to be paid into their own hands when they should respectively
attain

attain the age of eighteen. The surplus of the donor, who had no near kindred, was given to the Foundling Hospital, the Magdalen College, and to build an asylum for eight single women upwards of fifty. The will of this lady was so particularly worded, and one of the executors dying soon after it was made, that there was a necessity for the nomination of another trustee to be joined with Mr. Selwyn, and who so eligible as *Robert Smith*?

“ Robert Smith, therefore, was named and appointed as an unworthy trustee and joint guardian to the Misses Selwyn, who, by myself and their unnatural father, were doomed to the wretchedness of a cloister.

“ At times, *my inward mind* would severely reprove me for this atrocious conduct; but the system of *the Reasoners* was so replete with arguments to stifle a sense of rectitude, that I braved the stings of conscience, and plunged still deeper in enormity.”

CHAP. II.

Mr. Veerman's Confession continued.—Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim in Captivity.

TO give proper rest to our readers, we divide the substance of Mr. Veerman's testimony, who was himself sometimes so much affected, and at other times so much affected his auditors—who, however, as we have intimated, had been made acquainted with the *material* circumstances of their own history—that he could not proceed without frequent interruption; and at the sentence with which we finished the chapter, he leaned his face upon his hand, and sat silent several minutes, seemingly absorbed in deep and painful reflection. At length,

length, starting from his reverie, he proceeded—

“ Perhaps I ought not to mix my opinion with a relation of simple matters of fact; yet as the profusion of the Selwyns seems but ill to accord with their rapacity, I will take the liberty to observe that their pride and ambition always appeared to me to equal their avarice. In all that tended to their self-gratification, they thought not of expence; nor did they scruple to use any means that gave into their hands an accumulation of riches and power. Eager, besides, to ennoble their line, they determined to purchase an Earldom, as soon as they could receive a confirmation of their hope of the death, without farther issue, of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, who were driven, by grief for the loss of their daughter, to a foreign country.

“ Not having heard any intelligence of the gentleman and lady last mentioned, for a considerable number of years, I once expressed my surprise, as I thought there
could

could not be any fear of their being still in existence, that the title had not been procured ; upon which, Mr. Selwyn, affecting an air of carelessness, said he had better considered the matter, and thought the character of a private gentleman, whose fortune was so ample, was more respectable than a *new-made* Peer, especially when the Peerage must be purchased.

“ I perfectly, and that from my heart, coincided in that opinion ; but, awakened to suspicion by his confused manner, and hasty dismissal of the subject, I determined to scrutinize the business, and by means of a master-key, with which, in an excursion of Mr. Selwyn’s to Windsor, and of his Lady’s to a retired situation in Essex, I opened his *escritoir*, and found letters from Mr. Blenheim, with which I had not been made acquainted. The first that I perused, gave the relation of the gentleman and lady having sailed from Leghorn to Naples, with a hope that Mrs. Blenheim might receive benefit from the voyage. Some succeeding
ones

ones were dated from Palermo, and informed Mr. Selwyn that the lady was certainly amended in health, but still very low in spirits. After these, a long period intervened, if all the letters were preserved, before they had any farther intelligence of these injured wanderers. At length, they received an account, which, according to an annotation written upon it by Mr. Selwyn, did not reach London till near two years after its date, of their having been captured by a Turkish corsair in their intended return to England by way of Genoa; that their then residence was in Constantinople, where the lady was confined in the seraglio, and the gentleman, who passed for her brother, employed in the gardens. The distresses of their situation are then pathetically described; but one all-consoling circumstance animated their spirits, and kept alive their hope of a reverse of fortune, which was, that the Grand Signior, whose pride and vanity were unequalled, valued himself on the number and elegance

gance of the ladies of his seraglio, whom he scarcely ever visited; being so much attached to, and so completely governed by, his favourite Sultana, that, except as a matter of form on set days, he seldom saw his fair captives, who had all the indulgence consistent with what still must truly be deemed a state of thralldom; on which account, and by means of a friendly eunuch, Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim had had several secret interviews; but the exterior guard was so numerous, and the superior officers so strict, that all hope of escape was precluded: but Mr. Blenheim stated, that if proper application was made to the Turkish Ambassador, who, it was well known, would not be invincible to the power of gold, if offered in sufficient proportion, he had hopes of being set at liberty with his wife; who, he thanked Heaven, had served no other purpose than to add to the number of the European ladies—for upon *them*, the Sultan set the highest value—in the seraglio. Mr. Blenheim therefore authorized

Mr.

Mr. Selwyn to dispose of any part of his own estate which would produce sufficient to secure the Ambassador's good offices.

“To this affecting statement and request, it appeared that Mr. Selwyn remained totally obdurate; as a letter of late date lamented the continuance of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim's captivity, and conjectured its being owing to the failure of letters.

“Possessed of this secret, I meditated a release of the worthy couple, but was puzzled how to proceed, in order to effect my purpose. At length, Mr. Selwyn, by my looks and manner when the subject of the Ivetsey estate was mentioned, began to suspect my having more knowledge of what it evidently was his intention to keep secret, than he knew how to account for, and distantly questioned me upon the circumstance; but determining to make every thing subservient to my own interest, I affected to evade his enquiry, and leading him on till he outstepped his guard, I pretended to draw my conclusions from his
own

own discourse ; having long, I told him, conjectured his being in possession of some exclusive secret relative to the Blenheims. In a short period, a perfect disclosure ensued, and I was subsequently more than ever in his confidence, because he was more than ever in my power.

“ The determination of Mr. Selwyn was not to take the least notice of any letter he might in future receive from the unfortunate captives ; and though I now began to experience some uneasy sensation when a sense of their mutual and unmerited distress occurred to my mind, yet I disregarded the monition as much as possible, because Mr. Selwyn was profuse in his payment for my self-murdered conscience.

Nothing material intervened to interrupt our career of vice, till Miss Blenheim was ten or a dozen years of age, when my father, and soon after my mother, were taken from this transitory state ; whereupon both she and Miss Rosemont were sent, at my instigation,

instigation, to the Nunnery in the Desert, as sisters.

“Dressed as a man of quality, I myself introduced the young ladies to the Convent; where I intimated their being of first rank, and that, could they be induced to comply with the wishes of their friends to take the veil, the circumstance would be both lucrative and honourable to the Monastery.

“In process of time, another, and another letter arrived from Mr. Blenheim, all of which were treated with the same determined neglect as the first had been; and it was evident, from the style of some of the last written, that the poor gentleman and lady began to despair of ever again enjoying liberty.

“About this period, Mr. Selwyn was thrown from his horse, and received so bad a hurt on one side, that he was several weeks confined to his apartment; during which interval, as he had then some material
business

business pending in London, where I remained to settle circumstances of consequence, I had several letters from him which treated of the writings and titles to the Beech Grove and Ivy Tower estates; and as I understood that his physicians deemed his recovery doubtful, I determined, and effected my design, to draw from under his hand, such replies to my officious questions relative to the Blenheims, the Congreves, and the legacy given to his daughters, as were he to die, should assist the power I wanted to obtain over his son, whom I ever heartily disliked.

“When Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim first went abroad, Mr. Selwyn wrote such a history of the whole affair, as were he to have died suddenly, would have taught Mr. William how to proceed, should Mrs. Blenheim have produced a child or children in another country. His instructions were, not to let one suspicious syllable escape him during the life of the gentleman and lady, but upon their decease, to dispute

the claim of their offspring, upon an assertion that he, she, or they, were children which had been *adopted* only, with the design of defrauding the descendants of Mrs. Selwyn.

“ When his son was fifteen or sixteen, Mr. Selwyn found he had so well profited by the precepts which, by both his parents, as well as by the preceptor they had selected to perfect his education, had instilled into his mind, that he disclosed to him the whole arcana of the fraudulent design; and the little gentleman was so adapted to the part he was allotted to act, that in a short period he suggested some improvements in the intended future proceedings. Soon after his having been initiated into the family mystery, he was sent to a distant seminary, with his head full of the important communication; and being moreover extremely proud of having been entrusted with a matter of such moment, he was frequently writing to me upon the subject, which I, wishing to have such additional attestations

attestations of the truth of the circumstances—should I subsequently deem it to my interest to make a disclosure—sedulously encouraged; drawing him on to make such replies to my letters, of which I kept correct copies, as would alone have established the verity of the statement in a court of judicature.

“ And here I must stop to observe, that I do not speak of this conduct as my boast, but to my shame; being at length thoroughly convinced of the atrocity of my past habits of life, sincerely repentant for the evil I have occasioned, and resolved to the utmost of my power to make amends to the sufferers.”

CHAP. III.

*A further Continuation of the Confession of
Mr. Veerman.—The Commencement of his
Acquaintance with the Witches.—The
Witches repair to the Cottage.*

MR. Veerman was again overpowered by his own sensibility, but having suppressed his emotions, he proceeded with reading his confession.

“ Having commenced an acquaintance with several young men, who extravagantly pursued every bias of vicious inclination, and not chusing to be behind hand in any projection of my comrades, I more frequently than formerly demanded supplies
from

from Mr. Selwyn; whose parsimony, except in what related to his own self-gratification, was extreme, and only equalled by the avarice of his son, and the selfishness of his lady; and as the two last named were usually made acquainted with my applications for money, I sometimes found it difficult to procure sufficient for what I termed necessities, which at length produced some dissention; and being at one time heated with wine, I used something like a threat of disclosure, which being unguardedly resented by the son, produced a quarrel, and at leaving the room where the dispute arose, I stopt at the door and caught the word—*death*—which I then fancied was applicable to myself; and from that hour, feared some attempt upon my life, and returned to my lodgings in a melancholy mood, meditating on the past, the present, and the future. This was about the period of one of my visits to the Nunnery, where I regularly went in the disguise of quality, to make payment for

the board and education of Miss Blenheim and Miss Rosemont; and when I saw the innocent victim of my treachery, was tempted to make a disclosure of the fraud that had been practised; but considering that I had no money, and that the Selwyns were people of great power, I was inclined to defer the discovery till the young Congreve's should arrive at age, as I believed they, upon being by my means reinstated in their family rights, would assist the cause of the injured Blenheims; and I was determined, upon some pretence or other, to prevent Aurora's taking the veil before that period.

“Dissentions between me and the Selwyns now daily increased; and it was at length agreed that all personal intercourse was to cease, and that I was to receive an annuity during life. With this, I was well satisfied in all points, except that I apprehended Miss Rosemont's taking the veil before my project could be ripened; but while I was laboring to devise some means of
of

of deferring her making the irrevocable vow, a circumstance occurred which facilitated all my designs, and rendered my plans obvious and easy.

“ Soon after I had settled with Mr. Selwyn the business of the annuity, I was taken ill of a fever, which was succeeded by an extreme lowness. My physician advised my removal from London, where I then was, to some of the surrounding villages, and I was carried to Islington, to the house of a man of the name of Nelson, who gained his livelihood by an exhibition of little figures moved by clock-work, in the management of which he arrived at extraordinary perfection. He likewise affected to predict futurity to those who wished to know their future destiny, and taught several species of animals to perform such tricks upon his order, as seemed to argue for their rationality. This was a profession which he inherited from his father; but what carried his celebrity to its highest standard, was the addition to his

c 4

family

family of a sister of his wife, who was the widow of a man named Mervin, clerk to some of the under secretaries of state.

“ Mrs. Mervin, during the life of her husband, had suppressed a power of which she had long found herself possessed, from an apprehension that he, who was a man of slight intellect, both proud and bigotted, would suppose she had some intercourse with evil spirits, should she make a display of that extraordinary gift of Nature; of which, indeed, she herself scarce knew either the cause or the extent; but being a woman of superior talents, and fond of reading, by chance met with a publication which, to her astonishment, treated of, and in some measure explained the gift above-mentioned; which gift was VENTRILOQUISM.*

“ After

* This word *Ventriloquism*, which has been termed *supernatural*, explains all the seeming mystery of Margaret's profession. By this power, and by the intelligence which the talkative Rachael and the lively Anna gleaned from servants, she was enabled to predict such *probable* events, apparently through the organ

“After the death of her husband, Mrs. Mervin visited her sister Nelson, with whom Mr. Mervin had forbidden her to hold any intercourse during his life; deeming an acquaintance with the wife of a necromancer—for such Mr. Nelson was reputed—derogatory to the dignity of a *Clerk in Office*.

Mrs. Mervin had not been long at the house of Mr. Nelson, before she discovered her powers to her brother and sister, and soon became one of the grand supporters of the predicting profession.

Mrs. Mervin and Mrs. Nelson, with their sister, Martha Hood, were left by the death of their parents to the care of an aged aunt, who owned and resided in the house, known by the name of the Woodland Cottage. In this situation she had many years been useful to the late Father Anthony,

organs of the mute creation, as astonished the vicinity in which she resided, and procured her the appellation of A WITCH.—*Vide.* a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Johnstone, at the end of the last volume.

who was Superior in the Nunnery in the Desert near half a century.

“ The Cottage, though (from the serpentine path which winds round the impervious neighbouring forest) apparently at a considerable distance from the Monastery, is, in fact, separated from it by only a few hundred yards ; and a subterraneous passage, which had been constructed when the Castle was built, gave the old lady free access to the Father before-mentioned.

“ This subterraneous passage opens into a part of the Castle known by the appellation of the NINTH TOWER, and so secretly was the inlet executed, that it is impossible for the nicest eye to discover it, without previous information of its exact situation and form ; which instead of being in the usual strait line, like a common door, is cut in a zigzag, and appears like several irregular joints.

“ I mention this circumstance particularly, because it will elucidate the deceptions which have been practised upon the inhabitants

inhabitants of the Monastery, whose native credulity assists the effect of pretended supernatural causes.

“ During the residence of the sisters with their aunt, they were unavoidably let into the secret of the subterraneous passage, as the Father used frequently to enter from the private door, and solace himself in the little retiring room on the second story. He was at first much displeased with the old lady for the introduction of the girls; but finding them pretty and lively, he was soon better reconciled to the circumstance, and after making each of them take an oath not to discover the secrets of the Cottage, admitted them, when he was not otherwise particularly engaged, to entertain him *in the painted chamber*—which was the name that he gave to a room dedicated to his entire use.

“ Martha, the youngest of the sisters, was reckoned beautiful, and on her, Father

c 6.

Anthony

Anthony showered his golden favours in profusion ; but she remained obdurate both to his entreaties, and her aunt's commands, to give him some portion of her affection. Martha was attached to the son of a neighbouring clergyman, and at length privately married to him ; after which, she was delivered of a daughter named Fanny, and in process of time, of another who was christened Anna, when she lost her husband by the bursting of a gun that he had levelled at a pheasant ; and having been married by a young college friend who visited at his father's, and afterwards went abroad, there were no witnesses of the performance of the rite, which never was registered, and the marriage was disowned ; whereupon the afflicted young widow, not then twenty, retired to the Nunnery, where she now resides as portress.

“ Father Anthony, finding Margaret and Rachael, who were virtuous young women, restraints upon his conduct, persuaded the
old

old woman to send them into the world; and they were afterwards married—the one to Mr. Mervin, the other to Mr. Nelson.

“ During my residence at Islington, I saw, and soon was attached to Fanny, the daughter of Martha Hood; and from that period, I date my entrance upon a life of virtue. Illness softened my mind to the impression of affection; and affection, inimical to vice, prepared it for true religion, and consequent future happiness.”

Mr. Veerman, after a short cessation, continued.

“ I will not give a detail of the vexations I endured, upon the first serious review of my past bad conduct.

“ Dreadful indeed, for a long period, was my situation; my distress of mind retarding my recovery, till I was almost reduced to the appearance of a skeleton! Suffice it, that my health was at length restored, and that Fanny and her friends, to whom I had communicated all the particulars of my past life, and who were
convinced

convinced of the sincerity of my repentance, accepted me as a relation elect to their family; and we projected several schemes to reinstate the Blenheims in Ivy Tower.

“As soon as I was perfectly restored to health, I proceeded to execute some business which was deemed a necessary preliminary to our undertaking.

“Amongst other plans, I waited upon Mr. Selwyn, and informing him of the ill state of my health, told him my physician had prescribed a change of climate, and that Lisbon or Montpellier were recommended in preference to any other situation.

“This was literally the truth, or I would not have told him so; for I was now grown to be as cautious to avoid falsehood, as heretofore I was the contrary.

“Mr. Selwyn seemed alarmed at an idea of my leaving the kingdom, especially of my going one point towards the east. It was obvious that he was struck with the possibility

possibility of my reaching Constantinople. I saw and increased his apprehension by saying, I had heard Italy mentioned as being situated in a climate favourable to people with such a decayed constitution as mine; at which he expressed the highest astonishment—wondered who could give me such pernicious counsel, and strongly recommended my going to a sea-bathing town upon our own coast, and declared he would defray the expence of the experiment.

“ We were once more apparently good friends: even William behaved to me with such a show of kindness, that had I not intimately known him, would have deceived me; but I had long studied his character.

“ By my renewed intimacy in the family, I gained possession of what I wanted—the little manuscript which Mr. Selwyn had written for his son, should he himself have died before that son's arrival at an age proper to receive the communication necessary for him to prepare a defence
against

against the claim of any child or children Mrs. Blenheim might subsequently have produced. This was effected by my seeing it amongst some other papers, which I had made it necessary should be produced, and observing that I knew no cause why it should not be destroyed.

“ Mr. Selwyn replied—‘ Nor I neither ; put it into the fire’—upon which I arose, took the paper, and substituting another, which I had ready for the purpose, slid it into my bosom to serve a better design. Possessed of my treasure, I hastened to Islington ; and Mr. Nelson, a man of cunning and enterprize, determined to pursue the business with energy ; but unhappily for us, he was taken suddenly ill, and died in three days.

“ An unavoidable delay now succeeded. We knew not upon what to determine ; but at length agreed, that I should propose to Mr. Selwyn my usual visit to the Convent, and that when I should see Aurora, inform her of the circumstances of her birth, and

engage her not taking the veil till the result of our measures could be ascertained: but here Mr. Selwyn had circumvented me, by going himself in disguise, and, which effectually precluded my re-appearance, by informing, or more strictly speaking, by *mis*-informing the Abbess of the decease of the person who had conducted thither the two ladies, known by the name of Rosemont.

“What confidence Mr. Selwyn placed in the integrity—let me recall the phrase—in the *secrecy* of Father Overdon, cannot be determined; but certain it is, that he was with him alone some hours, and that subsequently, the Father was most anxiously desirous of *Lavinia Rosemont’s* taking the veil.

“After this, I did not dare to make my visit to the Monastery, as such a proceeding reported to the Selwyns, would have created a suspicion that would probably have ended in a defeat of our design; if not in my destruction. Thus critically circumstanced,

circumstanced, we were obliged to act with the utmost circumspection; and the only eligible movement we could make, was to give ample information on the subject to Martha Hood, who entered into our views with a benevolent ardency.

“ Mr. Nelson, by whose management we were to have been supplied with money, had taken up the business with some regard to his own interest; but the widowed sisters, in addition to their wishes to assist *my* remuneration to the suffering family—they having conceived for me a peculiar regard, which I should be most happy to merit—were actuated by an earnest love for truth and justice.

“ At this juncture, Martha Hood sent, by order of their aged aunt, to desire the company of Mrs. Mervin, who readily attended her after an absence of several years, subsequent to a quarrel respecting her marriage. Three days after Mrs. Mervin's arrival at the Woodland Cottage, the old lady breathed her last on the bosom of
her

her niece, and as she left no will, her effects devolved in equal proportions to the sisters.

“ This event augured well for our scheme. The subterraneous passage—the traditional horrors of the Ninth Tower—the extraordinary cavity * near that part of the Castle—the peculiar situation of Martha Hood in the Nunnery—the puppets, machinery, and docile animals of Mr. Nelson—with the ventriloquism of Mrs. Mervin, seemed all to co-operate with our wishes, which were to secure Miss Blenheim against taking the monastic vow, as Mr. Nelson’s death precluded our collecting a sum sufficient to compass our design, till the arrival at age of the Messieurs Congreve, whom I doubted not having sufficient power to influence: and dreading to alarm Mr. Selwyn by taking the young lady from the Convent, lest he should *re-take*, and place her beyond our knowledge, we determined to let matters

* Vide. the letter to Mr. Johnstone at the end.

remain in *statu quo*, till we should be enabled to move them to advantage ; not even disturbing the tranquillity of the object of our solicitude with any intelligence, till the hour of necessity.

“ A considerable deal of money was found in the habitation of the old aunt ; with some curious manuscripts, which will upon occasion be produced ; likewise securities for several sums, which, could they have been immediately called in, would have been nearly sufficient for our purpose : but as we were necessitated to wait, Mrs. Mervin proposed commencing fortune telling—an occupation that, as the event has evinced, she rightly conjectured might furnish us with means to accelerate our design.

“ As soon as Mrs. Mervin and Mrs. Nelson arrived at the Cottage, they heard by accident that Mrs. Selwyn wanted a waiting-woman, in lieu of one who had then lately been married from her service. Fanny, who with Anna and myself remained
at

at Islington, was immediately presented to her imagination. She believed her residence at Ivy Tower might produce something favourable to our affairs, and wrote to me to endeavour to procure her a recommendation to Mrs. Selwyn; which was a matter of easy atchievement, as a Mrs. Hurdan, with whom I was upon terms of intimacy, had several times provided servants for Ivy Tower; accordingly she wrote the character required, and Fanny Hood, by the name of Fanny Redman, was, in a few days, duly accepted."

CHAP. IV.

Mr. Veerman's Confession concluded.—Justice Wilmot, his Daughter, and Captain Langley.

MR. VEERMAN continued.

“ Fanny, whose understanding was good, disposition amiable, and manners persuasive, soon gained the confidence of her new mistress ; who, though she did not unbosom herself to her, respecting the family secret, was not sufficiently cautious to break off, upon her entrance, such discourse with her husband and son, as, to one previously acquainted with the subject, afforded

afforded new light respecting their intentions. By this want of circumspection, therefore, and by taking advantage of William Selwyn's pretending love to her, she received full proof of the atrocity of the united three, in meditating to destroy the virtue, and afterwards confine in a cloister, the ladies, both then named Rosemont; but as she had no idea that they would use compulsitory means to effect their purposes, the horrid deed would, without her knowledge, most surely have been executed, had not Providence—to speak in a language to the sense of which I am now happily awake—interposed, and saved their innocence.

“ I hope I shall be excused for not keeping in a straight line of events. Some circumstances will now and then occur *after*, which ought to have been mentioned *before* others that they precede. I ought to have observed, that it evidently appeared, by the rusted hinges of the doors—by the papers of the deceased aunt,
which

which were a confused kind of accounts and memoranda—as well as by the evidence of Martha Hood, that no one, since the decease of Father Anthony, had used, or known any thing of the secret passage from the Ninth Tower to the Woodland Cottage; and as no disturbances from that part of the edifice had then of late occurred, the terror, when they were revived, was greater than formerly.

“ In the days of the subsequently sainted Father Anthony, the nocturnal orgies were frequently performed, that the terrific report might prevent the inspection of curiosity into the traditional mysteries of the Tower.

“ Martha Hood, the mother of Fanny and Anna, was privileged beyond a common portress, on account of the peculiar friendship which the kind-hearted abbess had conceived for her, upon her first admission into the society.

“ It is usual for monastics to change their names upon their entrance into these retirements,

retirements; but our portress was never known by any other appellation than that of Sister Martha. Of a temper greatly benevolent, Miss Blenheim at first experienced her kindness from commiseration, as it was supposed she had been disowned by her parents. In a short time she possessed her *affection*, from an observation of her admirable qualities; and it was with the highest self-gratification that she undertook to inform her and Miss Rosemont of the circumstances of their origin. The surprise they were both under, was, as it may be supposed, extreme; but that of Miss Blenheim was mixed with such a variety of sensations as almost overpowered her. Grief and joy ruled by turns, while affection of a twofold description divided her heart. First, as it respected her parents and Mr. Horace Congreve; next, as it regarded Miss Selwyn, Miss Emily, Miss Rosemont, and Mr. Ferdinand Congreve; to all of whom, as Martha Hood related to me the effect of the important disclosure,

she professed the most glowing attachment. And now, upon thinking of the usurpers at Ivy Tower, arose detestation and horror, which with the softer passions divided all the faculties of her soul; and the native greatness of her character, the seeds of which had hitherto lain dormant, as having no warmth from circumstances to excite their activity, now sprang suddenly forth, as if drawn to animation by the fervidity of Nature's vertical sun; for she who previously—though of a volatile disposition, was all softness, now seemed inspired by fortitude; ready to undertake the hardest deeds, and lamented that the part which her friends had judged it proper she should act, was only endurance; to which she promised to submit with reluctance.

“ And now—Of Mr. Selwyn's nocturnal visits, under the semblance of a man of high quality, to Father Overdon; a circumstance at first only conjectured, but subsequently confirmed by Fanny Hood—
Of

Of the strong suspicion that the Friar commanded Miss Blenheim's being left to Nature in the height of a delirious fever, which seized her upon the receipt of the letter forged by William Selwyn, before Mrs. Hood could communicate her secret, to facilitate the wishes of his *noble friend* for her removal from this sublunary scene—Of the signals given by the sisters to each other, by means of the bells, which for the dispatch of business between Father Anthony and the late possessor of the Woodland Cottage, had been prefixed at each end of the subterraneous passage, and united by a cord—Of the means by which the ocular and auricular seeming prodigies from the Ninth Tower had been effected—Of the success of the fortune-telling plan, and the disturbance it had occasioned in the breast of the guilty trio; particularly of the scene which Mrs. Nelson, who was practised in that art, had drawn of Ivy Tower, and exhibited in the necromantic apartment—Of the removal

of the Miss Selwyns to the Convent at Lexton—Of their escape from thence by the management of Fanny—Of her return to her mistress with the intelligence, and of the violence of the execrations of the father, mother, and brother, denouncing unheard of curses on the heads of the runaways—Of Mrs. Mervin's ventriloquising powers, exhibited in the church of the Convent—Of the natural cavity at the foot of the Ninth Tower, which assisted the arts of the reputed witches—Of the circumstances which, by means of the fortune-telling business, brought the confederates in the Blenheim cause acquainted with the Right Worshipful John-James Wilmot, one of his Majesty's justices of the peace for the Hundred of Cauldwell, and cousin-german to Mrs. Blenheim—Of his Worship's conviction of the truth of the statement, and his determination to assist with money and interest the restoration of the injured family—Of the betrothment of Horatio Congreve to Aurora Blenheim; and of
Ferdinand,

Ferdinand, his twin-brother, to Sophia Selwyn—Of the determination of the Mr. Horace Congreve, and of me, Donald Veerman, furnished; by means of the aforesaid Right Worshipful James Wilmot, with credentials from his Excellency the Turkish Ambassador, resident in London, to his Excellency the British Ambassador, resident at the Porte; to seek, pursue, and find (if possible) Robert Blenheim, esquire, and Eliza, his wife, parents of Aurora Blenheim; who was kidnapped by me, by order of Richard Selwyn, esquire, and of Beatrice, his wife, now unlawful possessors of the seat denominated Ivy Tower, and of the estate thereunto rightfully belonging—Of these, and several other circumstances thereunto pertaining, I leave Margaret Mervin, Rachael Nelson, Martha Hood, Aurora Blenheim, Selina Rosemont (so termed, not knowing whether it be her rightful name), Sophia Selwyn, Emily Selwyn, Fanny Hood, now known by the name of Fanny Redman, and her sister,

Anna Hood, to speak to and ascertain the truth in my absence, and in the absence of Mr. Horatio Congreve.

“I likewise call upon all of the before-mentioned, to witness, as far as they have seen or heard, the verity of what, before the Right Worshipful John James Wilmot aforesaid, I have here deposed upon most solemn oath, *if they can safely with their hearts and minds affirm the same.*

“Witness the hand and seal of me,
Donald Veerman, in the day of the
month and year of our Lord, above-
mentioned.

“DONALD VEERMAN.”

“Given in upon oath before me

“One of his Majesty’s justices of
the peace for the Hundred of
Cauldwell before mentioned.

“Sworn in the presence
of
and of

“The

“ The truth of the above, as far as eye-witness and ear-witness can ascertain, is attested before the said John James Wilmot, by

“ MARGARET MERVIN.

“ RACHAEL NELSON.

“ MARTHA HOOD.

“ AURORA BLENHEIM—

heretofore known by the name of Lavinia Rosemont—

“ SELINA ROSEMONT.

“ SOPHIA SELWYN.

“ EMILY SELWYN.

“ HORATIO CONGREVE.

“ FERDINAND CONGREVE.

“ FANNY HOOD—

now known by the name of Fanny Redman—

“ And ANNA HOOD.

“ Who, to the truth of the circumstances with which they are, or have been acquainted, are ready and willing to take their most solemn oath, before the afore-said Right Worshipful John James Wilmot, or before any other justice or justices of

his Majesty's, for any hundred or hundreds in his Majesty's kingdoms."

The above confession of Donald Veerman, gent. was attested and witnessed in due time and form, before his Worship Wilmot, who repaired, according to promise, to the Cottage in the Woodlands, the morning succeeding the evening in which the attestator read to his attentive audience, the words of the important paper.

His Worship Wilmot, reader, was a man of rare endowments. Rare indeed ! for he heard with his own ears, judged from his own understanding, and decided in his own mind on the merits of every cause which passed his cognizance, whether male or female, old or young, rich or poor, were the plaintiffs or defendants. This conduct may perhaps be deemed obsolete ; and as we have a wonderful desire of obtaining the appellation of fashionists, we do not think it meet to determine whether Justice Wilmot's *rare* endowments were

were rare *good*, or rare *bad* ones : that they were rare, is all we presume to intimate.

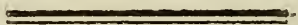
Justice Wilmot had an estate of a clear thousand *per annum* ; his age fifty-eight. He was tall, and commanding in his figure ; his countenance an *olio* of all that we term good. Greatness was hid in his heart : it did not tarnish, by giving a sternness to, his features.

One only child—a daughter—gilded the evening of his day. She was lovely, lively, beautiful. An officer of good family, but low in circumstances, was quartered in the village of our Justice. Nature had been lavish in ornamenting his exterior ; nay, she had shed with a profuse hand, abilities, which properly directed would have qualified him for the most honourable stations ; *but* she had neglected to give him—A HEART. Direful omission ! By no other boon compensated.

Captain Langley lived for himself ! Dead to the happiness or misery of his species, in himself he concentrated all his wishes ;

to himself directed the use of his great endowments; and *by* himself, were all his views absorbed. Captain Langley saw Miss Wilmot—saw she was beautiful, AND heard she was an heiress.

He determined to conquer. HE DID—*most fatally!!!* Alas! Miss Wilmot!!!



CHAP. V.

*An Evening's Airing.—A good Creature.—
A neat Cottage.—The dreadful Effect of,
ONE GLASS TOO MUCH!—Mary's
Distress.—He was a Father.*

CAPTAIN Langley found means to procure an introduction to the house of Justice Wilmot, and *too obviously* admired the

the fair Mary. The father saw his admiration, and suspected the attractive object be his estate: but Mary seemed pleased with the Captain, and perhaps—for who could chuse but love her—perhaps he had indeed given her his sincere affection! So reasoned the father. Money had no charms for Mr. Wilmot, and if Mary liked him——But still he did not much approve the Captain's mind; and he gave his Mary his opinion: yet he meant to consent to their union, should he declare himself, and should his daughter but *look* her wishes for his affirmative.

Captain Langley, conscious that his motive would not abide the scrutinizing parent's eye, persuaded Miss Wilmot to take with him an evening's ride; her father consented without approving, and a servant was ordered to attend them.

The Captain led to a small village; and stopping at a neat little white house, in the outskirts, entreated the young lady to alight; alledging that something was the

matter with one of his horse's feet, and the creature would go on in extreme pain if it was not relieved.

This was enough : poor Mary alighted, and the Captain desired the servant, who just then came up, to return with the horses to the little inn they had passed, and wait there till he should hear from him ; requesting him, as Miss Wilmot drew nearer, to examine the off foot of his mare.

“ Let us walk,” said Mary Wilmot, “ till Thomas returns with the horses. Yonder hill appears pleasant,” and she moved forwards.

“ No,” replied the Captain, taking her hand, “ the mistress of this little hut is a good creature, and very clean. She will give us a syllabub, and new bread and butter.” “ *A good creature !*” The denomination had a charm for Mary Wilmot.

But, unfortunate Fair ! thou hadst still to learn what, in Captain Langley's sense, a good creature was.

Captain

Captain Langley determined to marry Miss Wilmot, *because she was an heiress*. Despairing to procure her father's consent—and he had not sufficient affection for Mary to hazard her loss of the estate—he, by one of his own masterly strokes of policy, resolved to degrade *her*, that she might exalt *him*.

“When his Worship perceives that his daughter will probably produce him a grandchild, he will be glad to give that child a father.”

Thus reasoned Captain Langley! And thus *have* reasoned many a daring son of Britain, since Britain *was*—Britain. Shameful prostitution of the reasoning faculty! Shameful degradation of the animal called man!

The good creature—a Mrs. Sinclair in a village—saw the lovely victim with a malignant satisfaction. She had seen her before, but not as an object that would ever be the occasion of her emolument; whereas now—she was to have some guineas

guineas for her entertainment, and if the Captain succeeded in destroying her peace of mind, the sum was not to be doubled.

Miss Wilmot was greatly pleased with the inside of the cottage, which was indeed extremely clean, and followed her conductors to an inner room, fronting a little garden, and furnished in a mighty neat and accommodating manner. Throwing open a corner cupboard, two bottles of—alas! fatally prepared—wine, and a plate of cake, appeared in view.

“Will you, my Lady—Ah! I knew your Ladyship’s mother, when she was young and handsome like yourself—[Which we have authority for saying was an infamous falsehood]—Will you, my Lady, taste a glass of my poor wine, and eat a little mouthful of my cake? Nobody, an’t please your Ladyship, shall be more truly welcome,” curtesying and simpering at every syllable.

Mary drank of the wine, which looked clear and bright, and she eat of the
wholesome,

wholesome, but ordinary looking cake. In a few minutes she complained of being *intolerably sleepy*, and leaning her head against the side of the window, at the casement of which, some woodbines, a sweetbriar, and three buds, one just opening, of a moss-rose bush, made their appearance, while the declining sun, by his sidelong rays, exposed their partly covered beauties, she half shut her eyes, and scented the narcotic fragrance of the flower.

At that moment, a country girl appeared, and speaking to the Captain, said, that Mr. Thomas had sent to tell his Honour that one of his horse's shoes was broken; and that it would be half an hour before it could be mended, as the smith was gone to Mr. Bartlam's at the New Lodge.

"Is Mr. Thomas there?" asked the old woman. "Get him something to drink;" and hurried out of the room after the well taught rustic.

Miss Wilmot was uneasy; said her father
would

would be alarmed, and requested the Captain to ride the servant's horse, and order him to follow upon the other.

He said he would, and sat down at her side. "How happy, my Mary," sighed he, after looking at her some moments in silence, with a tender pensive air, "how happy could I live in this cottage with you!"

She blushed but made no answer. "Why," added he, taking her hand with a sigh, "why were you born the daughter of a man of fortune!"

"I was born the daughter of a *generous* man," replied Miss Wilmot, with another blush.

The Captain spoke his fears, and bewailed his fate. He even—shame to the practised libertine—bewailed his fate with tears, of which he seemed ashamed, and seemed to wish to hide.

Mary was softened; she was desirous to make him happy by an assurance of her
5 father's

father's consent to all *her* wishes ; but virgin modesty sealed her lips, and she could only blush.

Tones from a German flute at that moment impressed the air. Mary loved music. The Captain knew she did, and had ordered his fifer to attend the hour.

And Mary's soul was virtue. Chastity unsullied, even by thought, enrobed her mind. And yet—*Alas ! poor Mary !*

The Captain entreated her to drink *with him* one glass of wine. The sentiment—their future mutual happiness. He looked so full of tender woe, she had not the *heart* to refuse him.

She drank the wine.

“ And now, my dearest, lovely girl ! one glass to the happiness of your good father.”

“ Not one *drop* more,” said Mary.

“ What ! refuse to your *father's* happiness !” he asked, with a reproachful surprise ; for he knew she loved her father with enthusiastic fondness.

“ I cannot drink any more, Captain Langley,”

“Langley,” she heavily replied, being now sensible of an increased effect from the wine.

“Indeed you must, my Mary. One glass *between* us to your father’s health. Or only *taste* it, and I will drink the rest, made better by your having sipped a part.” She leaned her head against the wall, and said—“I cannot, cannot”—Her eyes were shut, and sleep seemed welcome. He applied the glass to her lips.

“To your *father*—my dear Mary!”

She tasted the wine, and faintly said—
“*My father!*—”

Pursuing his advantage, he *again* applied the glass, and she not having strength to repel his importunity, he poured into her lips the fatal beverage, which almost unconsciously, she swallowed. Hapless Miss Wilmot!!!

Captain Langley seated himself by her side. She rested her head upon his shoulder. She heard him speak. “Love—Honour—Love, pure, sentimental, chaste,
and

and unbounded—Love seraphic—a flame no less than that which warmed an angel's breast, pervaded his"—*according to his own assertions.*

"*To-morrow*, her father himself would for ever join their hands. Her father himself would to-morrow bless their union. She was even *then* his wife; for what was a marriage but consent of hearts?"

These were the arguments of Captain Langley—These, his professions; his solemn asseverations!

Hapless Miss Wilmot!!! She heard!—She loved!—She believed!—She fell!!! Yet fell unconsciously. Not with her own consent. Nor yet against it. *Hapless Miss Wilmot!!!*

When the deluded girl surmounted the effects of the baneful beverage—When reason reassumed her empire in her mind, and the recollection of what she *had* been, and what she *then* was, arose to awaken her to a perfect sense of the destruction in which, by a fleeting hour, she had been
involved

involved—When the image of her father, whom she so ardently loved, and whose sole joy she had constituted hitherto, presented itself to her imagination as sunk in grief and wretchedness, she started up in a frenzy of despair; and as by her exertions, the potency of the libation was in an instant totally dissipated, reason emerged from the cloud, and every circumstance appeared in array.

For some time she wrung her hands in speechless agony—walking forward and backward in the room in a torture not to be expressed, while the Captain, awed by her appearance, dared not to approach her.

At length, darting at him a furious look, she demanded her horse that instant; and when he would have soothed her sorrow, she frowned him into silence, and rushing out of the room, and out of the house, walked hastily onward till she saw the servant, whom she ordered to bring the horse; and springing upon the saddle, flew
back

back without waiting either for him or her destroyer.

When Miss Wilmot first alighted at the the door of the village brothel, the character of which (so guarded and so sanctified had been the behaviour of its mistress) was but little known, a tenant of her father's, experimentally acquainted with the convenience of the situation, saw her enter with Captain Langley, who, in his hearing, ordered the servant to examine the foot of his mare. The farmer followed the footman, and asked if the mare was lame.

“Not that I know of,” was the reply.

Alarmed for the safety of the young lady, he returned to the Cottage, and requested to speak with her, but the old woman, with whom he was well acquainted, peremptorily refused his entrance, upon which, hastening to the inn where he had left his horse, he galloped to the house of Justice Wilmot to inform him of the circumstance.

The Justice had walked out. The farmer
was

was told where he was : he followed him, and when he saw him, respectfully, and with many apologies, communicated his alarming tidings.

Mr. Wilmot snatched the hand of the farmer, who rode off another way, and returning home, ordered his horse to be led out, but turning his head, saw his daughter riding full speed up the avenue, whereupon he walked back to the house, and went into his study with a foreboding heart.

In a moment the door was opened, and Miss Wilmot rushed into the room. Throwing herself at his feet, almost breathless, and with wildness in her eyes, she exclaimed—“ *Oh ! my father ! my father ! I am ruined !*” and was fast sinking to the floor : but her father, who was *indeed* a father, caught her in his arms, raised her up, pressed her to his bosom, and in the sweetest accents of Heaven-giving peace, though he could hardly articulate, said, “ *My child ! my child ! thou art not. A*
father's

father's arms, and a father's heart are still open to receive thee, and to protect thee from future harm."

The scene which ensued can only be pourtrayed by the most fervid imagination, for it does indeed make language poor. The various passions which divided the very soul of the poor Mary, prevented any expression of what she endured. In that moment, perhaps, love to her father surmounted every other sentiment.

Throwing her arms around his neck with the most impassioned action, and hiding her face in his bosom, she forgot, for a moment, her sense of shame—her abhorrence of her villainous seducer—her crime—her wretchedness—and all the attending horrors of her situation. Overwhelmed at length by her own sensibilities, she fainted in the arms of her father, and was by him conveyed to her own apartment, where he left her to the care of an elderly female domestic, whom he gave room to suppose
his

his daughter had received a fall from her horse, and then retired to ruminate on the wretchedness of their situation; but too just to condemn any individual without affording him a fair hearing, deferred a decision till his daughter should be enough composed to give him, what still he dreaded to receive, some particulars.

At this juncture, the return of the servant who had attended Miss Wilmot, reminded him of the necessity of learning how far he had been privy to the dreadful transaction of the evening, and had the satisfaction of finding that the Captain, after the young lady's departure, had intimated his having offended her on some trifling occasion, and added that he was sorry to observe she was so captious; after saying which, he ordered some brandy, and pretending to put some water to it, gave him a goblet of pure spirit, of which he took so hearty a draught, that he could not sit upon his horse, and when he was sufficiently

sufficiently recovered to attempt a return, fell two or three times before the end of the first mile.

Mr. Wilmot received some little satisfaction, from the incapacitated situation of his servant, to form a conjecture of the truth of the circumstances, and with all possible patience awaited the recovery of his truly wretched daughter; but it was not till the evening of the next day that she was sufficiently composed to speak upon the dreadful subject.

CHAP. VI.

Virtue never can be lost beyond retrieve.—Miss Wilmot re-assumes her Dignity.

WHEN the good Justice had heard all that his daughter could tell him, and with filial tenderness, added to Christian mercy, had wept and soothed her grief, he asked her what line of conduct she wished him to pursue.

“To hide me—to hide me, my father, for ever from the world! but most sedulously from the wretch who has rendered me unworthy even of himself,” was Miss Wilmot’s reply.

“And

“ And is this, my Mary, your deliberate, or your too hasty determination, which you may subsequently repent ? ” asked the kind parent, hoping to hear a confirmation of her resolution.

“ Do you doubt me, my dearest Sir ? Have you not taught me to love virtue ? How then can I wish to bind my soul to vice ? No, Sir, fallen—sunk—degraded—wretched as I am, I still adore—more than ever adore ; because I more than ever know its worth—what I have violated. Captain Langley therefore must ever be an object of my abhorrence.”

Our Justice clasped his daughter to his breast in rapture, and said, “ My child, now more than ever dear, because now more than ever—”

“ Oh stop ! ” cried Mary : “ would not my heart by a too ready pardon, which I do not deserve. Had not Captain Langley discovered my too great partiality, in opposition to your evident disapprobation, he would not have dared to lay the snare

by which I have been so sadly—so wretchedly—so shamefully entrapped. Oh, my father! my father! I am ruined past redemption. It is not even your goodness that can save me. I have sinned against GOD—against you—against myself—and against society. Hide me, hide me from my own reflection! Oh! hide me for ever in the grave!” Starting from the side of her father, the unfortunate Mary traversed the room with a delirious air; wildly exclaiming, and incoherently talking to herself, till Mr. Wilmot, for some minutes too much affected either to move or speak, arose and led her to a sofa, where, resting her head on his breast, he endeavoured to sooth her by expressions of the utmost kindness, and by observing, in arguments drawn from Christian philosophy, that sincere repentance would wash, to the whiteness of snow, crimes of a crimson dye.

System most blest! System divine! What like Christianity, can sooth, can heal the afflicted

afflicted soul! What, like this sovereign balm, draws forth the sting, and cures the wound of worldly woe and guilt? Not the new-fangled doctrines of the age, hardening the sensibility of man to marble, and murdering all the sympathies of Nature.

Not poor philosophy, without religious aid; nor mints, nor mines of gold; nor kingly crowns.

And are there then some few—we hope not many—who from Christianity would blot the glowing tint of mercy, and of charity divine! Who preach up JUSTICE, mercy's guard, not guide, and deem it weakness to forgive offence against their own strait rules of virtue!

VIRTUE! extensive phrase! which comprehends all that is great and good in mortal man. Can virtue ere be lost beyond retrieve? She cannot; but by those who disavow and hate her. Watching an invitation which she knows to be sincere, she accepts the penitent offender's call,

and with redoubled vigilance, guards him from future straying.

Mercy—strange consequence!—is most decried and most withheld by those who most require it; while those, if such there are, who need it not, exalt, and with unsparing hand, dispense it to an humble suppliant. And this is the criterion of *Virtue*. VIRTUE is merciful, and VICE, severe.

Miss Wilmot was convinced, yet not quieted, by the arguments and kind soothing of her father. Her *soul was wounded*, and hope, though the consolings of the Justice brought her to view, kept in the back ground of the sable picture, and wore a melancholy appearance. The day dragged heavily on, and when she retired to rest, sleep refused its wonted salutary aid.

The next morning, Captain Langley, who, all the preceding day, had expected even a supplicating letter from the object
of

of his barbarity, sent a note importing his intention of dining with her that day. The note was put into the hands of the Justice, who, after due preparation, informed his daughter of its contents. Awakened to indignity by his unconcerned assurance, she hastily took a pen and wrote—

“ The only request I have to make to you, is, that you never more will appear in my presence. This is the last communication that can ever pass *between you and the writer.*”

Stung by the contempt which this note evinced, and entirely thrown from his intended line of conduct, Captain Langley rode to the house of the old woman, with an intention to project some scheme to effectually secure his destined prey.

The woman simpered and courtesied upon his appearance, as being under an expectation that he went to pay her wages, but he informed her that he had not effected his purpose, and that she must again assist him before she could be entitled to any reward.

Surprised at this intelligence, she expressed her concern, and her readiness to assist him to the utmost of her power. A plan was then laid between the worthy two, which could scarcely have failed to produce the intended effect, had it not been frustrated by an unforeseen accident: this was nothing more than the death of the noble Captain; who was thrown from his horse, and killed upon the spot within two hundred yards of the infamous habitation.

When this intelligence reached Mr. Wilmot, it conveyed inexpressible satisfaction to his parental heart, and he hastened to his daughter, to whom, after a proper preface, he communicated the important

important event. For a moment she continued silent; then turning to her father, said, "Excuse me, Sir, my sentiments are unutterable. Let me retire to ruminate on the late incidents of my life;" she then retired to her chamber, and sat in silent meditation till the dinner-bell summoned her to the presence of her father, who saw her with a countenance tranquillized, but melancholy.

In a few weeks, Miss Wilmot appeared to regain some portion of her former serenity, but was again soon over-clouded. The *consequences* of her indiscretion were not terminated: she was convinced she should, in a short period, be a mother.

Mr. Wilmot was prepared for this event, and being really ill with grief on his Mary's account, expressed his wish to try the air of the South of France. He went. Mary accompanied him; and in the South of France gave birth to a daughter.

Returning to London, the child was put into proper hands, under the name of

Melissa Singleton ; and Mr. Wilmot, with his daughter, proceeded to his native village, where they were received with joy by every individual in the vicinity.

Miss Wilmot was now addressed by several men of rank and riches. Once she might have been dignified by the title of a countess, but she steadily refused every proposal of marriage without regret.

At length a baronet, about four years older than herself, became possessed of an estate in the neighbourhood, just after he had buried his wife, whom he had married from motives of compassion. He saw, and loved, Miss Wilmot. Of all the men she had ever known, he was the most calculated to engage her affection. He *did* engage it.

Her father, though he spoke not, wished their union.

The gentleman made an overture, but was refused.

Chagrined and distressed, for he had believed she beheld him with a partial regard,

regard, he pathetically remonstrated ; and earnestly entreated to know *why* she determined to render him wretched, by so stedfast—so unexpected a refusal. She burst into tears.

Amazed and distressed at what he termed the phænomenon, he more tenderly pressed an explanation.

Affected by his manner, and confident of his integrity, she confided to him the fatal secret, which still—and now more than ever—preyed upon her peace, and fainted as he caught her in his arms.

Anguished on her account, he pressed her to his breast in silence, and when she revived, seated her upon a sofa ; then kneeling on one knee at her feet, took her hands between his, and with an impassioned countenance, spoke his fervent admiration of her conduct in the most impressive language ; declared that she had exalted herself in his *opinion, respect, and regard*, by her honour and candour ; and ended with an earnest supplication that she would

permit him to obliterate her remembrance of all past sorrow, and confer upon him the supreme delight of constituting her future felicity, which he trusted would greatly overbalance all she had known of grief.

Overpowered by her own sensibilities, and by the noble affection expressed by the gentleman, she could but faintly speak her still-determined negative, which she concluded with saying, "After this, never importune me upon the subject; but be, my FRIEND."

At that moment her father entered, who seeing them engaged in earnest conversation, was retiring, when the lover entreated his stay, and they united their persuasions that Mary would consent to lose, with the renunciation of the name of Wilmot, the remembrance of her former errors and consequent distress; but in vain were their entreaties: when these memoirs were given to our historical repository—for, with respect to Miss

Wilmot, we have advanced in point of period—she still, at the age of twenty-four, retained the name of her family; but her father keeps alive the hopes of the Baronet, and says, that he shall soon exert some portion of authority in his favour.

Whether or not he will succeed, must be left to the decision of time and our various readers. Those who wish that an unfortunate young woman, so circumstanced, should overcome her scruples and find happiness with the noble-minded Baronet, will suggest, that after a period passed in repenting sorrow, she complied with the wishes of those most dear to her, and lived blest in a conjugal state.

Those who, on the contrary, think that the demands of offended virtue could not otherwise be satisfied, will believe that she continued to reside with her father, in habits of friendship with her lover, without deviating from the determination she had made, of never owning any other name than that of Mary Wilmot.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The Justice's Visit to the Witches.—Promises to undertake the Cause of the Blenheims.

THE story which we concluded with our last chapter, had its foundation in real life, and we trust that its representation, as it affords an instance of the distress in which a deviation from the salutary laws, prescribed by society for the female sex, involves the unfortunate, and we must add, not without a sigh of pity, *criminal* offender, will be excused, perhaps applauded.

Miss Wilmot once said to her father—
“ Do I, my dear Sir, deceive myself? Or
is

is the love which you implanted in my mind for every principle of virtue really increased? I pity—Oh! how greatly do I pity!—those who err, and fall; depriving themselves, thereby, of what I hold so valuable—a name—a mind unblemished! And how I venerate—almost adore—*her*, who has experienced and *outstood*, the base designs of him she loved and trusted! But till the fiery trial has been past, let no one vaunt her virtue, nor think herself secure. Happy the woman whose purity remains unsullied! She, most of all, who is conscious of the greatness of the blessing, will commiserate the penitent who has suffered a deprivation which the whole world cannot compensate!”

By the leave of our readers, we will now return to the Cottage of Mrs. Margaret Mervin, and Mrs. Rachael Nelson, our celebrated Witches in the Woodlands, from
which

which and from whom it may probably be deemed we have been too long absent.

A short period previous to our date, Mr. Justice Wilmot received such an account of the wonders performed at the Cottage, as greatly surprised him; and to amuse his daughter, proposed that she and the Baronet, together with some young friends of Miss Wilmot—for, by the kindness of her father, the timely death of the noble Captain, and the ignorance of the *worthy* matron, his coadjutor, her sad, sad story was not known, she was visited by everybody—should go, by way of a frolic, to see the talking little gentlepeople.

Mr. Wilmot was a distant relation to Mr. Blenheim; and to him, that unfortunate gentleman, upon not receiving any answer to his late letters to Mr. Selwyn, had twice written. Once the letter miscarried; and once William Selwyn calling, as he did almost every day, at the Ivetsey post-office, the master of which was tenant to his father, and seeing, amongst other
packets

packets directed to Mr. Wilmot, one which he knew to have been sent from Mr. Blenheim, told the office-keeper that, as he was going to the Justice's, he would take them with him, which would spare his Worship the trouble of sending; his house being two miles from the office. This trick succeeded. The Selwyns kept back the letter from the captive, who, having written so many without ever receiving an answer to any of them, began to believe they were never sent from the Turkish continent.

Had not the vanity of William Selwyn been too great for the exercise of his prudence, Mr. Veerman would never have been privy to this circumstance; but, proud of his manœuvering, the youth could not resist the impulse of boasting to this associate his qualifications for intrigue: though his father, no longer in need of Veerman's assistance, prohibited the communication of the letter to Mr. Wilmot, and never knew that his son had disobeyed his order.

When this circumstance happened, Mr.
Veerman

Veerman had not determined to befriend the suffering party; therefore it rested, amongst many other incidents, in a quiet corner of his mind; but upon his, secretly and in disguise, going down to the Woodland Cottage, the name and character of Mr. Wilmot was mentioned in his hearing.

Struck with the recollection of the letter, he started, and said, "*The very man;*" and consulting with his confidants, the scheme of requesting the Justice's assistance was instantly adopted, and the very morning of the arrival of the party to see the celebrated machinery of the Cottage, was fixed upon for waiting on his Worship. Margaret, as Mr. Veerman did not publicly appear in the neighbourhood, was the deputed ambassadress; and about an hour previous to her setting out for his house, his Worship, whom the young people had prevailed upon to accompany them, appeared at the wicket.

After they were seated in the parlour, previous to the exhibition, Veerman, well
qualified

qualified for the office, undertook to fish from the servant who attended them, what it was necessary for the Witches to know; and the moment it was understood that Justice Wilmot was of the number of the enquirers, his path appeared direct.

The exhibition commenced: the young people were delighted, the Justice entertained; and while the attention of the company was drawn to some opposite objects, the scene of Ivy Tower, which (upon the information of Fanny, that she was sure she should one time or other prevail upon, at least, her *lady* to visit the Cottage, Rachael had purposely painted) was shifted to view; and instantly a voice, thrown by Margaret into the mouth of a figure resembling a druid, about three feet in height, surprised the company by the following couplets.

Pray, your Worship, turn your eye.
See what's doing here on high;
See a lovely heiress drowned,
Yet she's still on British ground.

You

You must bring dark deeds to light,
You must do the injured right.
But till Justice lift her sword,
Of these truths speak not one word.
You a man shall meet to-morrow,
Who'll explain this scene of sorrow.
Fear not—but believe and trust.
What he says, *that do you must.*

The eyes of the company were rivetted to the imaginary speaker, and till the voice ceased, they saw not the painting, which first struck the vision of Mr. Wilmot, upon whose recollection the report of the child's having been drowned, instantly flashed, and he exclaimed—"Gracious Heaven!" as by the instantaneous shifting of the scene, the prospect vanished. To the younger part of the company, the painting was enigmatical. When the iniquitous business was transacted, they were children, and did not remember to have heard a relation of the circumstances.

Mr. Wilmot was going to elucidate the particulars, when Margaret threw her voice
across

across the room, and said in a whisper, which seemed to issue from the wainscot, "Hush ! hush ! may it please your Worship, till you have more ample information."

Ventriloquism was, at that time, but little known, or his Worship would probably have traced the deception, to its origin. In this age of art and science, men are not to be duped by appearances. They are even so wise as to account for things unaccountable ; which, it must be confessed, they often do in a most *unaccountable* manner: it being impossible for a creature so endowed as MAN, not to understand every mystery, both *in* and *out* of Nature.

It cannot indeed be denied, but that these knowing philosophers are oftentimes most egregiously mistaken ; and, that by their sophistical display of causes and effects, puzzle the matters which they undertake to elucidate.

When the good Justice heard the whispering voice, he started, and looked
around

around; but being fearless, and of a strong mind, though not versed in ventriloquism, he kept silence, and seemed to attend, while yet absorbed in other contemplations, to the amusing scene before them: cats, dogs, monkey, parrot, and the little gentry from the recesses, being all employed to entertain the company. What passed, as our mysteries have been developed, it is not necessary to repeat particularly.

The young party was extremely diverted; one prim little Miss excepted, who was conscious of having been too truly depicted, and expressed her resentment to the little urchin Fatima.

“ You are mistaken,” said Miss Sukey Sycamore, to the apparently speaking image, “ I am not so fond of admiration as you have presumed to pronounce.”

To which Fatima seemed to say, in gaiety, “ Facts will speak for themselves, Madam. Your conscience makes you
captious.

captious. Before I take my leave, I will sing you a song which I wish you to remember." The same voice then continued—

"She that meditates the most
Is not always virtue's boast ;
Nor the silent and demure,
Ever peaceable and pure.
But the lively, brisk, and smart,
Have more innocence of heart,
With not half so much to dread,
From the mischief in her head."

When the company was departing, one of the little figures robed in black, with a long white curling beard, advanced to the Justice, and with a bow, without speaking, put into his hand a sealed paper ; on the outside of which was written, in a neat and legible hand—

Not to be perused before witnesses.

Our Justice smiled, and put the paper into his pocket, and when he was retired, read as follows.—

"You

“ You have a heart warm with benevolence. You have relations in distress. If you will condescend to be near the entrance of the western thicket to-morrow morning, as soon as the sun shall rise, you may hear a secret of great importance.”

Strange, and perhaps hazardous, as this invitation appeared, Mr. Wilmot, upon ruminating on the extraordinary circumstances that had occurred at the Cottage, determined upon being at the place mentioned, by the appointed hour, as well as to keep the business entirely secret, till the result should appear; and the remainder of the day was spent in recapitulating the diversion of the morning.

After having employed great part of the night in reflecting on the painting which
represented

represented Ivy Tower, with the man and the child just in the act of falling into the river, the lines spoken by the mimic druid, the whispering voice which enjoined him to secrecy, and the sealed paper which had been given him at his leaving the Cottage; all these together, as having the same tendency, determined him to investigate the circumstances, and not only to meet the man at the entrance of the western thicket, but to repair, if it appeared requisite, to the Woodland Cottage without attendants.

According to this determination, he arose early, and secretly went to the rendezvous, where he met Mr. Veerman, who requested his entrance into the wood, lest he himself should be seen by any accidental passenger.

Not being dismayed, our Justice followed his conductor to a covered spot, where, after a short but solemn preface, he was made acquainted with all the particulars

which composed what we have given as the confession of Donald Veerman.

Amazed, and not willing to give a too hasty and injurious credence to the tale of a stranger, and, according to his own acknowledgment, an assisting culprit in the iniquitous transaction, he proposed to attend Mr. Veerman to the Cottage, where every thing had been prepared for his expected appearance.

Several of the circumstances struck forcibly upon the recollection of Mr. Wilmot, and gave weight to the relation of those of which he had not any prior knowledge. He remembered the incident, which, at the time, he considered as kind, but officious, of young Selwyn's carrying him a packet of letters from the post-house, just as his man was going thither to enquire if any had arrived, as it was at a period in which public affairs were peculiarly interesting.

To the death of Mr. Blenheim's little boy, and, soon after, of the loss of his
daughter

daughter Aurora, for whom he was one of the sponsors when she received that name, he was perfectly alive; and when he had perused the manuscripts which Mr. Veerman had in his possession, he gave way to the persuasion which, from the commencement of the account, had pressed upon his mind, of the truth of the whole, and advised that mode of conduct which the combined party subsequently pursued; the consequence of which was, that Sophia and Emily Selwyn, who, by the management of Fanny, and Ferdinand Congreve, had left the Convent at Lexton, and were lodged at a little secluded hut near the sea, were removed to the habitation of the famed *wierd sisters*, where Horace Congreve had secretly retired on his return from conducting Miss Blenheim to the Convent, after having rescued her from the hands of Mr. Selwyn. Here too, when they could not, by any possible pretence, any longer resist the imposition of the veil, Aurora and Selina had taken refuge;

having been conducted by the friendly Portress, who had frequently facilitated an interview between Miss Blenheim and Mr. Congreve, through the subterraneous passage, to the utter amazement of the whole sisterhood.

Ferdinand was only an occasional visiter ; the Justice advising his continued residence at Ivy Tower, that, in concert with Fanny Hood, he might be able to discover and prevent the approach of any incident inimical to the projected proceedings.

After the plans had all been arranged, the Justice amused himself with the exhibition of the puppets, and the exercise of Mrs. Mervin's ventriloquising powers, of which he once had read with surprise : hardly believing the reality of the relation, given by some of the ancient writers, on this never-yet-accounted-for sportive gift of Nature.

After having been greatly entertained near half the day, he left the Cottage, advising Mrs. Mervin to pursue her fortune-

tune-telling profession; from which he said some incident, promotive of their wishes, might possibly arise, encouraged the hope to which the repentance of Veerman opened a door, and promised to visit them again before the expiration of the week, to enter into farther consultation.

CHAP. VIII.

Arrangements and Observations.—Mr. Wilmot in Danger.—And Retrospection.

WHEN the Justice returned to his own house, his daughter expressed her surprise at his long absence; but he made a trifling excuse, and retired to his study, where he

entered into silent meditation: and being perfectly convinced, as indeed he could not fail of being, of the truth of the premises, gave a plan in writing for the proceeding of the friends; which was to collect every interested individual within the precincts of the Cottage, where he wished them to remain, till the business could be put in such a train as would baffle all Mr. Selwyn's endeavours to counteract the plans for the restoration of the Blenheim family.

Mr. Veerman was then to write his confession, and give it upon oath in the presence of some confidential witnesses; after which, he and Horace Congreve, furnished with money from Mr. Wilmot's coffers, and by his interest, with proper credentials and recommendations from and to the Turkish and British Ambassadors, were to proceed to Constantinople, to ransom, by any possible means, the unfortunate captives.

Ferdinand Congreve, who ardently wished
to

to accompany his brother, was prevailed upon to continue in England, as his presence on several occasions, seemed to be absolutely necessary. His ostensible residence was to be at Ivy Tower; his visits to the Cottage in the Woodlands in perfect secrecy. To account for his frequent absence from the Tower, he was to counterfeit an indisposition which required the aid of sea-bathing; and in consequence, to hire a lodging in a village close to the shore.

In three days the Justice returned to the Cottage, when some other arrangements, too minute for detail, took place upon consultation; after which, Veerman set off for some letters, memorandums, and other manuscripts, which, with his attested confession, were to be left in the hands of the Justice, that in case of his death before the ransom or rescue of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim could be effected, he might possess power from credentials to proceed in restoring all the rights of father, mother, and daughter.

As Mr. Wilmot expressed an earnest desire to see Miss Blenheim, a note was despatched to Sister Martha to convey her, on a night appointed, through the passage; it not, at that period, being deemed proper to withdraw her entirely from the Convent.

Sister Martha acceded, and his Worship promised to be punctual to the appointment. Accordingly they met, and Mr. Wilmot was struck immovable by the uncommonly strong similitude which Aurora bore to her father; a similitude, he said, which was alone sufficient, in his opinion, to validate her claim as his daughter.

Mr. Blenheim was a handsome man. Mrs. Blenheim, a woman of remarkable sensibility. In Aurora, their perfections were united. To a countenance full of fire and sweetness, was added a form most exquisitely graceful; and her understanding, principles, disposition, and temper, did honour and irradiate her figure and features.

features. Her address to the Justice was impassioned.

“ Will *you*, Sir,” asked she, “ assist me in regaining a father and a mother ! And have I *indeed* a father and a mother in existence ! Shall I throw my arms around them—be pressed to their bosoms—kneel at their feet—and receive their tenderest blessing !!! Oh, Sir ! Oh, my friends ! no one can form a due estimate of the exquisite joy arising from the hope of experiencing a parent’s embrace, without having been previously deprived of it through a series of anxious years. I always conjectured there was some mystery respecting my origin, which but for that gentleman,” waving her hand towards Mr. Veerman, “ might never have been elucidated, therefore my obligations—”

“ Talk not of obligation,” interrupted the conscious penitent. “ You surely ought rather to consider me with abhorrence for having been the means of your family’s distress.”

“ Another might *never* have listened to the voice of conscience,” said Aurora. “ With another, the secret might have died, and my dear, dear father and mother forever have been consigned to the horrors of slavery. Oh, Sir! Oh, Mr. Wilmot!” clasping her hands with almost wild impatience, “ when, *when* will the business be set in motion! *When* will Mr. Congreve and Mr. Veerman be authorised to depart?”

“ Not a moment shall be lost, my dear child,” replied the Justice. “ To-morrow morning I shall set off for London, and hope to return in ten days with credentials, letters, &c. from the Turkish Ambassador, and from the family of the British Ambassador to that gentleman, now resident in Turkey.

Upwards of an hour was spent in the interview between Mr. Wilmot and Miss Blenheim; his Worship then took his leave, and Mr. Congreve conducted the young lady through the passage to the
expecting

expecting Portress, who conveyed her through *another* secret winding into a gallery that led to her own apartment.

“ To-morrow morning I shall set off for London, and hope to return in ten days.”

The prevention of the designs of mortality, by means the most unexpected, has so often been a theme of observation, that much comment upon it would be as useless as to endeavour to prove that we are not always to continue in this state of existence; but this one circumstance we will venture to observe. The more strongly determined a man is to perform such or such an action, and the more certain he thinks himself of success, the oftener it happens that he meets with disappointment, as if to check a presumption that otherwise might eventually prove fatal.

When the good Justice returned from the Cottage to his own habitation, he felt the night—we may say the midnight air, penetrate through his frame, and by the

time he reached home, was extremely hoarse, aguish, and full of pain.

He had told his daughter, who sat up to receive him, not to expect him till late, as the business upon which he was going, and with which he would acquaint her at his return, would detain him much beyond his usual hour of being abroad. She, therefore, was not anxious till she saw him, but the moment of his appearance gave her alarm. "For Heaven's sake, my dear Sir, what is the matter!" exclaimed Miss Wilmot, the instant that her father entered the room. "Are you hurt? Or are you ill?"

"Not hurt, my dear," he calmly replied; "nor yet I believe very well. The air, which is keen and damp, has somewhat affected me. Let me go to bed, and I will to-morrow acquaint you with what I intended to have informed you upon my return."

Mr. Wilmot was immediately attended
to

to his apartment by the affectionate Mary, who gave him a gentle family sudorific, which probably was in some degree serviceable ; nevertheless, he was not on the morrow able to fulfil his promise of communicating the occasion of his absence the preceding evening. On the second day he was worse ; on the third, his disorder was pronounced to be a dangerous typhus fever, which was not at its crisis till the twenty-eighth day ; and after that period he continued so extremely low and weak, that it was with difficulty he could be heard to speak ; so greatly reduced had he been by the violence of his disease.

This unfortunate event caused an unavoidable delay in the business relative to the Blenheims, as neither money nor interest, sufficient for the purpose, could otherwise be produced than through the medium of Justice Wilmot, till Horatio and Ferdinand Congreve should arrive at age, had demanded, and were put into possession of the estate of their family ; and
this,

this, though they were upwards of twenty, seemed a long period in perspective, as it was not doubted but that Mr. Selwyn would, if possible, defraud them of the whole of their property.

It was during this illness of our Justice, that those events which wore the appearance of enchantment, terrified the Sisterhood in the Desert.

The confraternity in the Cottage were apprehensive of danger in taking Miss Blenheim from the Monastery, lest by any possible means her retreat should be discovered by Mr. Selwyn, and she should be seized, and carried beyond their knowledge.

It was therefore determined, that every invention which art, natural or supernatural powers, and such surely may those of ventriloquism be termed, could effect, should be practised to prevent the vow from being imposed upon the two fair friends; which would have rendered even their success in restoring the
Blenheims

Blenheims and punishing the Selwyns, a subject of regret.

To effect their purpose, the Cottagers (in which number, we, on this occasion, include the Congreves and Mr. Veerman) united with Martha Hood in the exercise of every power of which they were singly, or together, in possession. The whispers and louder voices in the church, thrown round the vaulted roof, or as from the mouth of the Virgin, by the art of Mrs. Mervin, were finely aided by the reality of the previous tempest, which Anna avowed she believed to be the determined assistance from Heaven.

The exploration of the Ninth Tower had been incited by the Portress; by means of whom, the Sisters in the Cottage had prepared every thing for the terrific reception of the examiners; even an air-gun had been placed at an unseen corner of the opening, to extinguish any light which Martha should intimate it would be prudent to take along with them to the Tower.

When the monastic party had ascended the stairs, Horace and Ferdinand Congreve, with Mr. Veerman, who were all pleased with the frolic, and played many more pranks than were necessary, sallied from the trap door, and, fastening that which opened into the court, burnt some tow that had been dipped in tar and brimstone, then throwing it about the floor danced round it, producing thereby the gigantic shadows which had been perceived by the good Father Clement.

The screams, groans, and flash of fire which, upon the visit that Mr. Selwyn, in the disguise of a nobleman, made to Father Overdon, considerably terrified the hearers, were produced by our ventriloquist, upon a summons, by the bell, from the Portress; who, suspecting something mysterious in such a nocturnal appearance, thought that no harm could be produced by such an exercise of her Sister's powers, whether it did, or did not, as she conjectured, relate to Aurora Blenheim. The event justified her
her

her policy ; as it was a proper prelude to a more terrific proceeding.

When Miss Blenheim first recovered from her fever and delirium, Martha acquainted her with the deception that had been practised with respect to the letter supposed to have been written by Miss Selwyn ; assured her of the faith of her friend, and promised her an interview with Mr. Congreve ; but forbore, at that crisis, to acquaint her with the circumstances of her origin, least the communication should be too overwhelming for her weakened spirits, and likewise render her distressed at the unavoidable delay of restoring *her* to her parents, and *them* to liberty, to England, aid to happiness.

Satisfied with hearing from Sophia, and in sometimes seeing Horatio, she was more tranquil than if expecting some greater event ; and as the hope of living with them was sufficient to determine her against the veil, it was not till just before her interview with Mr. Wilmot, at the Woodland Cottage,

Cottage, that her name and circumstances were communicated to her by the faithful Martha.

When the intelligence of the illness of their grand ally, the Justice, was communicated, the plan respecting the conduct of the days appointed, first, for the declaration, and secondly, for the solemnization of the monastic vow, was systematically laid down by Mr. Veerman; and if any part of it had failed, Aurora was to have affected sudden indisposition, and to maintain an obstinate silence, till she and Selina could, with safety and secrecy, be conveyed away.

And this, passing rapidly over a portion of time, which we have previously passed more leisurely, brings us to the perfect restoration of good Justice Wilmot.

CHAP. IX.*The Departure of the Plenipotentiaries for Constantinople.*

AS soon as the gentleman mentioned in the preceding chapter was sufficiently recovered to attend to the subject, he explained to his daughter the circumstances with which the reader is perfectly acquainted, respecting Miss Blenheim, the Selwyns, the Congreves, and their friends in the Woodland Cottage.

Miss Wilmot, benevolent by nature, rendered still more so by misfortune, entered warmly into the interest of the sufferers,

sufferers, and begged to know if in any degree she could be serviceable in the affair; declaring she should not grudge a voyage to Turkey, to witness the joy of the captives upon their redemption, and receiving the information of their daughters being alive.

Mr. Wilmot, who wished to increase the consequence which the Baronet before-mentioned had with his daughter, requested her, to spare him from too much talking, to unfold the story, under injunctions of secrecy, to Sir James Maynard—that being the name of the man who might truly be said to be the lover of Mary Wilmot—as he should wish for his company to London to solicit the letters he intended to procure for Mr. Congreve and Mr. Veerman.

Mary obeyed the orders of her father, and the Justice sent information to the Cottagers that he would be with them the next morning, to take the oath of Mr. Veerman upon his written confession; the mention of which circumstance re-conveys
us,

us, after a necessary retrogradation, to the conclusion of the twenty-second chapter of the first volume.

Without any recapitulation of Mr. Veerman's narrative, we will suppose ourselves to be at the Woodland Cottage; at which place, besides the party whom we have of late deemed its inhabitants, were assembled — Fanny Hood, who had obtained leave of her lady *to visit a friend*; the Portress, from the Convent, who, under pretence of indisposition, had desired not to be disturbed, and was therefore, as the Sisterhood believed, locked up in her sleeping-room while she was treading the subterraneous passage; Justice Wilmot, his fair daughter, and Sir James Maynard; for after the messenger had been despatched with the letter to *Mrs. Mervin*, it not being safe to make public by a direction any other name, it occurred to his Worship that there would be a necessity for disinterested witnesses, and none more proper than Mary and the Baronet; they therefore
attended

attended his Worship to the habitation of THE WOODLAND WITCHES, where they were received by an union of the best sentiments of man.

After proper introductions, and *respective* expressions of esteem, reverence, compassion, admiration, gratitude, and the dawning of genuine friendship, the business of the morning was completed; and Miss Wilmot promising to visit the recess, during the absence of her father, returned with the gentlemen, who the next morning set off for London, and in ten days completed their wishes; travelled back to Ivetsey, again visited the Cottage, supplied Messieurs Congreve and Veerman with credentials and money, and left them to prepare for a voyage to the Levant.

The evening before their departure was spent, by the parties most immediately concerned, in a pleasing melancholy. Miss Blenheim's whole soul was divided between present grief and expected joy. The affection between her and Mr. Congreve
had,

had, by frequent intercourse, arrived to the most sublime height to which human affection can soar. It was pure, yet fervent; impassioned, yet refined. Formed by Nature to constitute each other's felicity, no caution, no art, no affectation, was required on either side. By pursuing their own wishes, each party gratified those of the other; so exactly consonant were their principles, their sentiments, and their dispositions.

Nor was the union between Sophia Selwyn and Ferdinand less perfect; but their situation, though sufficiently distressed, was not so affecting as that of the other pair; the ensuing separation between whom, together with its occasion, beat down all the barriers which, what Richardson termed, *femality*—had Aurora been endowed with any portion of that virtue—might have raised against the unreserved, yet truly delicate acknowledgment that, but for the purpose of his going from her, she should consider his absence as a most heavy

heavy affliction. "But go, Mr. Congreve," she said, with the voice of heroism; "and if—*dreadful if!*—if I do but *live* to see you return, AND with my father and my mother, from that hour will I be all your own. *Your* wishes shall be *my* wishes; and my study, your happiness."

What must be the transport of such an ardent mind as that which informed Horatio Congreve, upon hearing this confession! In impassioned silence he caught, and held her to his breast; while she, unable to utter one more syllable, wept, with her face reclined upon his shoulder. In the tenderest language that ever flowed from the lips of love, combined with manly sense, did Mr. Congreve both sooth and strengthen the mind of his loved Aurora. The voyage, independent of his absence from her, he spoke of as a pleasant aquatic excursion; and would not suffer a doubt to be entertained of either the existence, or certain ransom of her parents.

Pointing her eye over an intermediate
space,

space, he painted, in the most vivid colours, the joy her parents would experience in their recovered freedom, and the restoration of such a daughter; their own mutual happiness, with that of *his* brother and *her* friend; all which, he trusted, a short period of time would effectuate.

Sanguine in her temper, Aurora admitted the possibility as probable, the probability as certain; and viewing herself blest in futurity, forgot the dismalness of the present hour. Mr. Congreve saw her enthusiasm, and, encouraging its continuance, spent a rapturous evening with the lovely object of his affection, previous to his retirement for three hours; it being the plan of Mr. Veerman and himself to set off from the Woodlands before the dawn of day. Just before they separated at the farther end of the lawn, which, as we have said, was bounded on every quarter by a steep hill, whose sides, covered with briars, were impervious to a traveller's foot, Ferdinand and Sophia appeared in earnest

conversation. Their subject was the ensuing loss of Horace. Beloved by every one to whom he was known, every one connected by consanguineous or congenial ties, lamented the necessity of his absence.

Nor was that of Mr. Veerman, a matter of indifference. He had, by an earnest penitence, rendered himself an object of regard, and by his services, of consequence to all in the little community. Justice Wilmot, a man of true piety, was particularly sedulous that he might be treated with distinction; both, as he said, on account of the obligation under which all the friends of the Blenheims must ever be to him, for the disclosure of the atrocious transaction, and that it might encourage and confirm him in his resolves to obtain better habits. Endued by nature to have been a valuable member of society, he unfortunately fell under the observation of Mr. Selwyn, whose offers of riches, honours, &c. perverted the proper exercise of
of

of his abilities, and but for the awakening of never-exhausted Mercy, would doubtless have led him on to destruction.

“How,” said Sophia to Ferdinand, as they crossed the lawn, “shall I bid your brother adieu? and how console Aurora in his absence?”

“We must share the latter task,” replied Ferdinand; “but my own separation from my brother will, I fear, monopolise all my philosophy, and instead of assisting to part from him with calmness, shall call upon you to alleviate my sorrow.”

“The sweetest office of friendship,” returned Miss Selwyn, “is to sooth the mind in affliction; and to have power to effect that purpose, more gratifying—charming as that likewise is—than to partake of joy and happiness.”

“Both are delightful,” said Ferdinand, as he seated Sophia by the side of Aurora, and himself by that of his brother.

“But for this separation,” said Miss Selwyn, “how happy—”

“Talk not—think not,” interrupted Horatio, “of separation; but view through the telescope presented by Hope, an ensuing rapturous meeting, terminated by an *in-terminable* union between persons whose minds are already, I trust, indissolubly united.”

“*You are going,*” said Ferdinand, “and feel not that separation so keenly as we, who are to be left, must do. Upon the wing, pressing forward, and darting to action—employed in the great, the important business, you cannot be sensible of that vacuity which Miss Selwyn, Miss Blenheim, and myself, must necessarily endure, while waiting in ardent expectation—”

“Say not so, my brother,” again interrupted Horatio; “nor put me upon reflecting how blest you will be in the dear society from which I shall be banished; while you, if I *must* draw the picture—”

“Oh stop!” exclaimed Ferdinand, “your outline is sufficient. I see my ingratitude;
but

but the desire I have to accompany you is so ardent, that your leaving me behind precludes my perceiving the happiness of remaining. Sophia, are you not angry with me for having a shadow of a wish to leave the realms which you inhabit?"

"I am angry with you for asking the question," she replied; "and should be still more so, did you not *wish* to go; yet I own I am not displeased that your continuance in England is deemed requisite; not *only* as it respects myself, but because I think my beloved friend will experience satisfaction from the circumstance.

"*Indeed* I shall," emphatically replied Aurora. "Next to Horatio, Ferdinand will, I trust, ever be most dear to me; and I must return my Sophia the compliment of saying, that not *only* on my *own* account, but upon *her's*, I rejoice in this regulation; though I regret that thereby the brothers are deprived of the high gratification of each other's company."

"A truce with your compliments," says

Emily, who, with Selina, just then advanced unobserved: “are we not all equally—yes, *equally* concerned in this event? We are, if you will allow friendship her just claims. Of love, thank my stars! I know nothing; and Selina has forgotten all she was taught: therefore friendship, and friendship only, be the theme.” Emily, naturally lively, affected still more than her usual gaiety to divert the more deeply interested four; and by her management, the separation, though extremely affecting, was borne with some degree of heroism.

At twelve, the parties retired to rest; and at three on the ensuing morning, Mr. Congreve and Mr. Veerman, waiting in the skirts of the wood, were met, at the appointed hour, by the carriage of Justice Wilmot, in which they were conveyed the first thirty miles towards London, where they soon arrived; and from thence took shipping, and proceeded to the metropolis of the Turkish empire.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The Selwyns perplexed.

WE will now return to the family, which we have so long neglected, at Ivy Tower; retracing the time to the period that will present the return of the party from the frolic of having their fortunes told by the Woodland Witches.

It was not, as may have been pronounced, a silly compliance with female whims, that induced Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn to accompany the young people to the celebrated cottage of the Augurers. Deep in policy, they always, if possible, made

G 4

trifles

trifles the means of effecting their greatest purposes, well knowing by that mode of conduct, suspicion would not so soon be awakened, as by the employment of more apparently powerful methods.

It was intended that GOLD should direct the speech of the Prophetess ; that William Selwyn should instruct her in a story applicable to Miss Blenheim, who, it was not doubted, would readily fall into the pit which had previously been dug for her destruction.

When Mr. Selwyn heard, what he thought the sentence of the parrot ; when he saw his own habitation—its removal for a fiery sword ; again heard his own sentence from the supposed parrot, and read the writings presented to himself, his wife, and his son, which, in mysterious language, all glanced at the circumstances of the Blenheims, he was more than as if thunder-struck. The MORNING was an expression that often occurred in the manuscripts which were given to the Selwyns, and
puzzled

puzzled them to explain, till Mr. William suggested its signifying the name of Aurora. This was enough; the suggestion was adopted, and the explanation heightened their fury and malignity.

“The MORNING shall appear.”

“The MORNING shall arise.”

“The MORNING shall triumph over the darkness, and shall reign in the land forever.”

These were the mysterious sentences which were enlightened by the name of Aurora. “It is surely witchcraft!”

“The wretches must be suppressed.”

“No; there will be danger in such a procedure.”

“It will be impolitic to make the d-v-ils our enemies.”

“D-mn them altogether! What can they do to our injury?”

“Where can Donald Veerman be concealed? we have not heard from him for an unusual length of time.”

“Would he were under ground! It

would be a good act for a man to send him to his long home."

"What *can* be done?"

"Let us wait and observe the conduct of these infernal women."

"Fanny may, perhaps, develope their characters. She is a shrewd girl, and has some acquaintance in Ivetsey."

"Perhaps it was chance that guided their expressions, and led them to speak in a manner which *seemed* applicable to us."

"Chance! the d-v-l chance! It must be a d-mn-d lucky hit to give us, undesignedly, such a blow. But I repeat—let us wait and observe the tenor of their conduct."

This, and much similar conversation, passed between these confederates on their return from the Witches; and the destruction of Miss Blenheim was more than ever determined upon. William wished to have the glory of subduing and triumphing over her virtue; but Mr. Selwyn himself chose that department; for he thought—at least that was the reason which gained his lady's
vote

vote in favour of his decision—that such an assemblage of beauty might tempt even his son to marry her, without a shilling of portion; by which means, his parents would be completely in his power.

William, who saw he was determined, guessed his apprehension; which was, however, groundless; for he was not fond enough of the married state to enter into it without a golden lure, and all, to which Miss Blenheim had a right, was his already. Besides, he began to suspect her preference of Mr. Congreve; a union which must not, on any account, be suffered to take place, and which would as effectually be frustrated by his father's success as by his own: moreover, when she should once be subdued she would be his—this was his horrid mode of arguing—at an easier rate; therefore, not being very *choice*, in what he termed his love, he determined to content himself with Selina, who, he perceived, observed him with such an attention, as his vanity—a quality of which he possessed a most

ample share—readily construed into admiration.

The result, the reader already knows. He likewise knows that when, by means of William's industrious inquiry, Mr. Selwyn discovered that Aurora had taken refuge in the Convent, he again visited Father Overdon; to whom, under the disguise of nobility, attended by his Son as a livery servant, he imparted the necessity there was of preventing the Sisters, as they were termed—and termed truly, as sisters they were, both in adoption and affection—from evermore going beyond the walls of the Monastery; painted the immense importance of their seclusion; said every one to whom they were allied, had rather see them dead than in the world, as their appearance would imprint an indeliable stain upon several families of the highest renown in the kingdom; and ended a very long harangue with the presentation of a large purse filled with gold, and a promise of one of tenfold value.

After

After this, a correspondence ensued between the Father and his Grace in masquerade; and when Miss Blenheim was ill, the piety of Father Overdon determined that her fate should be left to the will of Heaven.—It was; and Heaven willed her restoration.

When in the letters which, by the conveyance of William in a garb of servitude, passed between Selwyn and the Friar, the former was assured that Aurora had no intercourse, either verbally or scriptory, with any one without the Convent walls—and little did he dream of either the passage, or the kindness of Martha Hood—he was somewhat relieved from his anxiety.

Soon after this, business carried him to London, where enquiring of one of Veerman's friends, what was become of his companion, he answered *he was dead*.

"Dead!" repeated Mr. Selwyn, between question and exclamation, "*Dead!* Are you sure?"

"Sure!—sure enough," replied the

other; "he has been buried these six weeks." This was intended by the speaker for a piece of wit upon Veerman's abjuration of their society; and Mr. Selwyn being just then summoned to attend his agent, he dismissed the informant, without waiting for the explanation that he had opened his lips to give, of the *reformation* of his acquaintance, which he expected would produce a pleasant surprise to the gentleman; but in that he would have been mistaken. The intelligence of the *death* of Donald Veerman was highly gratifying to Mr. Selwyn. Possessed of that, he waited for no other, and not wishing his joy should be obvious, was glad of a pretence to leave the presence of the man, who, he imagined, was preparing to give him the particulars of his companion's illness and decease.

Had the circumstance of Mr. Veerman's death, of which however Mr. Selwyn *nothing doubted*, wanted any corroboration, it would have been given by the non-application

application of money from that quarter, as he could not imagine that the demand of the annuity would cease, but with the existence of the annuitant; and the time of its being due had passed.

Wrapped, therefore, in fancied security, he congratulated himself, his wife, and his son, on their being sole possessors of the family secret; and now defied the sorcery of all the Witches in all the Woodlands in the kingdom.

Returning to Ivetsey, and gladdening the hearts of Mrs. Selwyn and Mr. William with the account of Mr. Veerman's death, they enjoyed one happy day, and looked forward to felicity uninterrupted.

Felicity uninterrupted, even with virtue for its basis, is not the lot ordained to mortal man. Felicity uninterrupted, with *vice* for its foundation or concomitant, is an incongruity—an utter impossibility, according to laws that are immutable.

Some of the opinions which have been given, of our efforts to amuse and amend
the

the younger part of our species, have been delivered in such dictatorial terms, as have irresistibly discomposed the general cast of gravity which distinguishes our features, and impelled us to relax the latent risible muscles, which the profundity of our habits have almost rendered incapable of properly performing the office allotted to them by Nature.

“ In that conclusion, you are wrong.”

“ In those sentiments, you are perfectly right”—have been the criticisms with which we have been favoured by some of our friends, who have, perhaps, forgotten that their decision may not always be absolutely incontrovertible: yet every one who pronounces upon the merit of a production, appears to think himself affronted, if his *ipse dixit* be disputed.

“ I do not assent to that opinion.” Or,

“ We differ in sentiments,” are expressions too humble, though they carry sixfold force, for any one whose consequence is raised by an appeal to his judgement.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

The Perplexity of the Selwyns increase.—They seek the Witches.--Are alarmed and offended, and meditate Revenge.

WE believe it may be incumbent upon us to give some elucidation of the cause of our last digression, as it may be pronounced to have no kind of relation to the subject from which we wandered. We had made an assertion. Assertions are said to wear an appearance of conceit; sometimes, the charge is true: sometimes false.

When a position can be proved, *ipso facto*,

facto, the assertion is allowable; when a subject will bear an argument, the decision of—" *You are wrong, Sir!*"—cannot but be deemed pedantic, except the assertor has a parental or masterly authority: we, therefore, halted at pronouncing the impossibility of a continuance of felicity, when founded upon, or accompanied by vice; and without considering that we were wearing and wasting the patience of our perusers, glided on till it was time to finish the chapter.

We left Mr. Selwyn, with his lady and son, congratulating themselves upon the greatness of their accumulations, and the certain continuance of their happiness. The day was a day of rejoicing. They summed up the causes of their felicity. The Blenheims never would return from captivity.

If they *did*, they never would know that their letters had been received, for VEERMAN WAS DEAD—*dead and buried!*

Nor would they ever know that their
daughter

daughter was alive, for Veerman was *dead*! Therefore, the estate, were they then to appear, must eventually be their own.

The ten thousand pounds left by Mrs. Marchmont to each of their daughters, were securely theirs; none but Veerman having known the contents of the old Lady's will, and *Veerman was dead*.

The estate of the Congreves was likewise added to their possession. One only difficulty remained, which was, to personate the mortgagee.

Mrs. Selwyn thought *she* could do that. But her voice, she feared, would betray her. *Fanny* was thought of for that office. *Fanny* was too well known, and too young. It was a *difficulty*; but it would, *one way or another, be got over and managed*.

Veerman might be supposed to have left a will, and given it to some child, for whom Mr. Selwyn might be constituted trustee. A child could readily be found! O! it could be managed twenty different ways, no doubt.

The

The money belonging to Sophia and Emily, was upon mortgage, and it could not be claimed—so d-m-n-d cunning had been the lawyer who made the will—without it was demanded under the signature, or by the executors, of the legatees; but they would soon be professed, and the d-v-l himself, though aided by the Pope, could not then get them from Lexton.

Thus reasoned, and thus rioted, the happy, thrice happy, family of the Selwyns. On the morning of the morrow, at an exulting breakfast, the escape of Sophia and Emily was abruptly pronounced. The brightness of the day was clouded. *Where was Ferdinand Congreve? He went out three days before, and was not returned.* Horatio had not been heard of.

Surely they had not been deceived in their belief, of the brother last named having been in league with Aurora Blenheim, while he was in reality attached to Emily, as, it was suspected, Ferdinand was to Sophia; and that they had together
secreted

secreted themselves, with an intent of effecting a double marriage. This suggestion set them in an uproar. "If that be found to be the case, may everlasting curses—"

The door was opened. Ferdinand appeared, and prevented, at that time, the imprecation; which, however, was formally pronounced by both father and mother, and received an AMEN from the brother, as soon as the circumstances of their escape were more fully known, and no hope afforded of their being recovered.

"Where have you been, Ferdinand?" sternly interrogated Mr. Selwyn, for Ferdinand still resided at the Tower.

"To Mr. Standford's, Sir."

"I do not believe you."

"Then my replies will be of but little consequence," said Ferdinand, and was going.

"Stop, Sir. You are in mighty haste."

Ferdinand stood still, with an air of firmness, as if expecting his commands.

"Where

“Where are you going, Sir?”

“Not any where, till to-morrow.”

“Where then?”

“I propose being at the music-meeting at Western Lodge.”

“You may retire, Sir.” After Mr. Congreve left the room, the father and son ordered a carriage, and set off for Lexton; from whence they returned unsuccessful, and much disturbed, bringing with them the mournful-looking Fanny, who pretended to be much distressed, and indeed was so, lest the retreat of the young Ladies, which was only temporary, should, by the restless prying of the Abbess, be discovered, before they could with safety be removed to the house of the Witches in the Woodlands.

After the Selwyns had some time brooded the first disappointment, and comforted themselves with the consideration, that Ivy Tower and the estate of the Congreves were still in their possession, intelligence arrived of the loss of Aurora and Selina.

This

This was the event which harrowed up their very souls. No language that we are masters of can express their internal commotion. It would fatigue, without gratifying, both ourselves and our readers, were we to endeavour at a rehearsal of their execrations and profane complainings.

“It was true, the only *ex*-possessor of the family secret, Donald Veerman, *was dead*; but who knew what papers of intelligence he had left behind?” “Yet what would *papers* signify? Nobody alive could swear to the truth of their contents, be they what they might. And then—had they been of consequence, they should, before that time, have heard of them from *somebody*.”

“No reason therefore for alarm on *that* account.” “But where the plague *is* the d-v-l-sh girl?” “That d-mn-d Horace Congreve is most assuredly at the bottom of the business, and they probably are, by this time, married.”

“It is strange that Ferdinand appears so
unconcerned

unconcerned about his brother." "But let them all go to the d-v-l together! Their machination will not be of any consequence, now that Veerman is dead." Thus apprehended—thus reasoned—thus consoled—thus again feared—and, at length, concluded, the cavilling culprits, on the subject of Miss Blenheim's escape; and settling, in time, into some degree of what they denominated tranquillity, the mother proposed another frolic of fortune-telling.

Without allowing, even to themselves, that they had any belief in the predictions of our Witches, it was agreed upon, on the Saturday evening, to go on the following Monday, which they accordingly did; and Mrs. Selwyn was attended by her favourite Fanny, whom, in her own private affairs, she intrusted without reserve.

When the enquiring party approached the Cottage, Sophia and Emily, with Miss Blenheim and Ferdinand Congreve (which last had been informed by Fanny of the intended visit, and who was supposed by
the

Selwyns to be at his bathing lodgings), were secured from human ken by their retreat into the subterraneous passage.

The predictions were, at first, light and amusing; but soon, some strange portentous phrases were *whispered* round the room; and at length, Margaret said, in a slow and solemn tone, “My knowledge of some hidden—some mysterious affairs, renders me almost incapable of performing the task I have undertaken; for let me turn to this or to that side of the mystic page, still the same portents arise before my vision.”

“Dear me!” cried Fanny, catching hold of her Lady’s arm, “what is that?”

“What!” asked Mrs. Selwyn, alarmed.

“Did not you, Sir,” speaking to William, “see something all in white, that seemed to smile, and then to frown? Dear Madam, do let us go home!”

“Do not be a fool, child,” said Mr. Selwyn, with severity: then turning to

Margaret, he said, "Come, tell me whether or not I am to be first minister of state."

"Take my advice," said she, "and SEEK TO KNOW NO MORE."

"Yes," said Selwyn, with a furious aspect which seemed to threaten destruction. "Yes, I will know *all* that *you* know; and, likewise, *how you came by your knowledge.*"

Margaret stood unappalled, and coolly replied, "*My witness is not upon earth. My proof is under-ground.*" Meaning Veerman, who was upon sea, and Aurora, in the subterraneous passage: then ringing a bell, which Rachael, who conducted the machinery behind the painted tapestry, knew how to answer, she assumed an aspect of solemnity, and in an authoritative tone, said, "Ultramundio, come forth and appear."

Instantly a sound was heard, like a hollow rushing wind, which was succeeded by a groan, and the appearance of a little figure
from

from one of the corner recesses, whose *habillement* seemed coeval with that of the inhabitants of the ark.

“Do you think,” asked Mr. Selwyn, in a sarcastic tone, “that we are such fools, as to be frightened by puppets moving upon springs? No; we are superior to these tricks, I will assure you. It is your prediction that we await. We are not such children as to wish to see an exhibition of dolls.”

“*Ultramundio*, come forward,” said Margaret, “and vindicate the rights of your mistress.”

Rachael, who heard the words of her sister, now wound up the clockwork that actuated the figure, which had previously been dressed for the occasion, and sent it into the room; and Margaret supplying its want of speech, by throwing her voice against it, the Selwyns could not conceal the astonishment which seized them, upon hearing, as if from the lips of *Ultramundio*, the following sentence.—

“ The morning shall appear, and the day shall arise, when that which seems set in endless night shall shine, and gladden the horizon ; then shall all false luminaries be eclipsed ; darkness shall succeed ; the Sun, and the Moon, and the Dog-star shall be enveloped in clouds, and the MORNING alone shall shine and give light in their orbs.”—In saying which, the figure lifted up its hand, shook its head, and, standing a few moments silent, retired to its recess.*

This, as the idea of ventriloquism never presented to either of the Gentlemen or

* Such of our readers as have not seen much machinery or automata, may think that we relate what it is beyond the power of either nature or art to effect ; but those who have witnessed the successful efforts of mechanical genius, will know that we have kept much *within* compass, in the relation of what springs, wheels, &c. can produce.

It was objected by a friend, who perused some part of the manuscript, that it was impossible the puppets could retire upon command : he did not consider that the mistress would know the length of their movements, and proportion her conversation to that certain period, at the end of which, she might safely order them to retire.

With respect to the wonders exhibited by VENTRILOQUISTS, we refer our readers to the authorities recited in the Addenda.

the

the Lady, surprised them into silence. Their reading had not been in that line; and ventriloquists were, in that era, scarcely ever heard of by the public. Looking upon each other, they knew not what to say; but Mr. Selwyn, at length, assuming resolution, arose with a wrathful countenance, and threatened Mrs. Mervin with prosecution, if she would not instantly unfold the arcana of her profession.

Turning upon him an eye expressive of ineffable contempt, "Take care," said she, "how you provoke my rage! Know that I have ministers of vengeance within my call, whose appearance would stiffen you with horror!"

At that instant, she sent a piercing scream around the room; not knowing whence it proceeded, occasioned a fear which they could neither conquer nor disguise.

"You will prepare to hear from us in a different way," said Mr. Selwyn, as he conducted his Lady to the door, while

William gallanted Fanny ; “ your sorceries—if such they be—shall be suppressed.”

“ As you please, Sir,” said she ; “ only take warning, and take care. REPENT. REFORM. RESTORE.”

Enraged, yet scarcely daring to reply, they re-ascended the hill, and returned to Ivy Tower, where, unrestrained, in the presence of Fanny, they vented their impotent ire, and threatened destruction to the WITCHES IN THE WOODLANDS.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

*A Dinner at Ivy Tower.—The Company visit
the Cottagers —Peace, Friendship, and
Hope resident in the Habitation of
the Woodland Witches.*

THE inducement of the Selwyns to seek the counsel of our Witches, was not, as our readers will believe, occasioned by much reliance on their prescience; though, as we have intimated, they went so far in their belief as to acknowledge *it certainly was strange!*—it was, indeed, *very strange!* but the leading motive of, at least, Mr. Selwyn, to indulge in the *female folly*,
H 4 was,

was, a desire to catch at any circumstance which might throw some light upon the perplexities which disturbed the tranquillity he had promised himself at Ivy Tower, in the enjoyment of his ample possessions; for, as he was ashamed to own any belief in witchcraft, he was convinced the woman at the Cottage must have some knowledge of his secret circumstances; an idea that the last visit greatly corroborated.

Determined, if possible, to drive them from the vicinity, yet afraid of irritating them by appearing in the business, Mr. Selwyn and his Son deemed it would be policy to inflame Justice Wilmot against *the wretches*; and accordingly agreed to take a morning ride to the house of his Worship, to which Mrs. Selwyn proposed an amendment, by observing that she soon expected Mr. and Miss Wilmot to dine at the Tower; that she could make a party, and send an invitation to the Wilmots amongst the rest, for the ensuing Thursday, when the mischievous—the *infamous* proceedings

proceedings of these *wierd sisters* may be made a casual subject of conversation, and his Worship stimulated to act in his judicial capacity.

The amendment was agreed to, *nem. con.* Mr. and Miss Wilmot, Sir James Maynard, and about a dozen more of the neighbouring gentry, were, upon the day and hour appointed, assembled in the spacious and elegant dining-room at Ivy Tower.

After dinner, our Witches were brought upon the tapis by William Selwyn, who sported some curious fabrications; many extraordinary incidents were related by divers in the company; and various were the conjectures respecting the source of their knowledge, which every one avowed was very surprising, amazing, astonishing, &c.

The Justice now affected seriousness; said the business ought to be investigated, their haunts explored, and the deception, if any there was, detected and exposed; lest the commonality, as he understood

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their

their fame was rapidly spreading through the neighbourhood, should be led to confide in their predictions, to the injury of society.

This was the point our Selwyns wished to compass. And that this was their aim, his Worship knew full well. Fanny had wormed herself into the secret of their design, and the Justice, as well as the Cottagers, had, by Ferdinand, been informed thereof. Every thing was, therefore, prepared for what ensued.

“I dare say,” said Selwyn, with a careless air (it being intended he should not appear as their enemy), “I dare say the people are harmless enough in themselves; it is the folly of the multitude which renders them of any kind of consequence, by the addition they make to what are termed their predictions. In an hour of frolic, when we had a young party at the Tower, Mrs. Selwyn and myself accompanied half a score of them to this celebrated Woodland Cottage; and I was mightily amused
by

by the anticks of some monkies, a well taught parrot, and some excellently managed puppets, which, as I plainly perceived, were moved by wires, by means of some person who stood behind a painted canvas, at the bottom of the room where they exhibit."

"And did *you* go, Mr. Selwyn?"

"And you too, Madam?"

"Well! I declare I should like to see them."

"And what *did* they say to you?"—proceeded at once from several rosy lips; to which Mr. Selwyn carelessly replied, "O! they chattered a great many commonplace things. Such as how many lovers, such a lady had; how many husbands, another *would* have, and so forth. Nothing of any import to any of the company."

"You may say what you please, Sir, to extenuate their proceedings," said the wary Justice; "but I am determined to explore their dwelling: and that, by gathering any

knowledge of my intent, they may not be more guarded than I wish them to be, I will immediately set forward for this strange retirement; inviting all who wish well to the cause of equity, to accompany me. You must excuse me, neighbour; for I feel it so incumbent upon me to pursue this line of conduct, that I cannot be diverted from my purpose."

This was so far beyond the hopes of the conspirators, that they really, for a moment, felt the appearance they assumed, of an unwillingness to accompany his Worship to the Cottage; but the Justice ordering his carriage, the major part of the company agreed to attend his exploration.

When they arrived at the summit of the acclivity; they found the wicket partly open, and proceeding down to the lawn, approached the door of the house, without seeing or hearing the signs of existence. William Selwyn then approached, and lifting the latch, the door gave way to his hand,

hand; upon which, the first sound they heard, was, as if it went from the cage of the parrot.

“Mistress, Mistress! see the gentry,

Lords and ladies, crowd the entry:

Some are grave, and some are gay.

Bring your domesday book, I pray.”

At this instant, Anna made her appearance, curtsied and smiled, and conducted the company into the parlour to Mrs. Mervin and Mrs. Nelson, who received them with politeness, and even with an appearance of kindness. As soon as they were seated, Justice Wilmot, with a magisterial air, opened the business of their visit, by alleging that a woman of the name of Margaret Mervin, and another, known by that of Rachael Nelson, aided by a young person denominated Anna, were in the practice of predicting the

3 destiny

destiny of their enquirers, by means of familiar spirits, in the shape, and under the appearance of animals, which are usually supposed to be dumb.

Upon this address, Mrs. Mervin smiled, and requested his Worship to explore any and every part of the habitation in which she resided, as well as interrogate all those who had the breath of life.

The Justice accepted this invitation; every closet in the Cottage was examined, every recess investigated, every one of the animals talked to, but all in vain: the automate, with Aurora, Sophia, Emily, Selina, and Ferdinand, were all in the secret passage; the entrance to which, without previous information, was imperceptible to the human eye. After every possible method was taken to develope the mysteries of the Cottage, Mr. Justice Wilnot declared to the company, that he saw no cause to accuse the Cottagers of malpractises; and that, except any material allegation should be lodged against them, he thought himself bound

bound to defend and protect them against every malicious accusation,

“The parrot,” observed Sir James Maynard, “is certainly a most extraordinary bird; but I have read of others of the species, who have been taught to repeat in a manner no less surprising; and what a narrow mind must that man possess, who does not believe any thing possible, but what he has seen, or can comprehend.”

“Did I not tell you, Sir,” asked the wily Selwyn of the Magistrate; “did I not tell you, that these Cottagers were harmless, and only amused the young people in the country with tales of lovers and husbands?”

“You did, Sir,” replied Mr. Wilmot; and turning to Mrs. Mervin, said, “This Gentleman, Madam, whose name is Selwyn, has assured me that your profession is sportive and innocent; and that you only amuse yourself with telling fortunes to young Ladies.”

“The Gentleman is very kind indeed, Sir,”

Sir," returned Mrs. Mervin, fixing her eyes upon Mr. Selwyn, who did not thank the Justice for this address to the Witch; "and I will endeavour to return the obligation."

Selwyn, in his heart, cursed the proceedings of the day, and returned to the Tower with his guests, who were afterwards warm in their praises of the inhabitants of the Woodland Cottage; and now, by the open protection of Justice Wilmot, secure from unmerited persecution.

Leaving Ivy Tower for a short period, we will continue at the Cottage, where a kind of *soothing, pleasing* melancholy reigned around.

Miss Blenheim could not but feel incessant anxiety, both for her parents and Mr. Congreve. Her friend Sophia, on whose kind sympathising bosom she relied for consolation, was herself under deep concern, on account of her father and mother; whose atrocious conduct she deplored; whose exposure she lamented; and for whom, notwithstanding they had never
treated

treated her with any endearing parental kindness, her bosom heaved with compassion. She likewise felt all the anxiety of Aurora, as Aurora was sensible of her's; yet, though they experienced additional grief on each other's account, still the participation rendered it easier to be supported.

The heart of Ferdinand was given to Sophia; and mutual was the affection which determined them to unite themselves by ties indissoluble, upon the return of the voyagers; before, it could not be, as the performance of the ceremony would have hazarded a discovery of the secreted party. No one, therefore, was more interested in the events depending, than Ferdinand. The happiness of his Sophia, his brother, Aurora Blenheim, and, consequently, of himself, was suspended in the balance; yet, from him, they all expected an example of fortitude, and he answered their expectation; for those hours that he spent at the Cottage, he exhibited a
countenance

countenance expressive of the brightest hope, and his language and manner removed every shadow of apprehension: but during the time, which policy necessitated him to loiter away at Ivy Tower, he was restless, joyless, and full of alarm for the safety and successful return of Horatio and Mr. Veerman—his sorrowful demeanour passing, in the opinion of the principals of the family, for grief at the disappearance of his brother; to the cause of which, as he gathered from Fanny, they now believed he was a stranger.

Emily and Selina, besides their own concern, found sufficient employ in endeavouring to enliven those who were still more immediately interested. The friendship between these two young women, was peculiarly soft and pleasant. Selina, though the difference between their ages was inconsiderable, looked up to Emily, as to an affectionate young mother, who would protect her; while Emily considered her as a dear child, whom it was no less her duty

duty than her inclination to defend: yet still the equality of friendship was maintained, and Emily confided in Selina with the same unreserve, as Selina reposed her sorrows in Emily.

Mrs. Mervin, Mrs. Nelson, and Anna, regretted the absence and hazardous enterprise of Mr. Veerman, whom they loved and respected, both on his own account, and on that of Fanny. They had known him only when he was determined upon being a *good* man—had witnessed his pangs of repentance, and were convinced his reformation was sincere.

Veerman was agreeable, and attached to their Fanny, of whom they were all very fond; and Fanny had given him her affection. Thus united by one common interest, as well as by sentiment, our Cottagers lived in an affecting harmony. Under pretence of seeing some friends in a neighbouring village, Fanny sometimes visited them with a cargo of intelligence; at which periods, Martha Hood usually obeyed

obeyed the signal of the bell, which the monastics enrolled amongst the supernatural noises of the Ninth Tower. If she could *not* give her daughter a meeting, she pulled the cord which moved the bell at each end of the Cavern, as an answer of negation.

The Woodland Cottage, as we have intimated, was a neat, but small habitation. Three rooms upon the first floor, three upon the seconds, and three upon the third, comprised the whole of the building, which was throughout in tolerably good repair. In this truly rural retirement, our friends were visited, as frequently as prudence permitted, by the good Justice Wilmot, his daughter, and the Baronet; who meliorated their confinement as much as possible, not only by their visits, but by baskets of fruit, books of amusement, and some musical instruments. Aurora, with the sweetest voice in nature, being an adept upon the harp, Sophia on the lute, and Ferdinand on the violin: they
were

were likewise aided by Mrs. Nelson, who blowed the German flute. It was upon this instrument, that she heightened the effect of her sister's ventriloquising powers; and on this, that she gave music through the cavern to the Ninth Tower. These evening concerts assisted, not only to soften and harmonize the minds of the recluse, but to elevate them to the sensibility of the cherubic choir.

In the Woodland Cottage—long before the era which was rendered important by the birth of Luther and his colleagues—long before Superstition was taught to blush at the chains which she had thrown around the Christian world, or to be ashamed of the obscurity in which she had involved the refulgent principle of piety, by an impervious veil of a sombre shade—was pure—was true Christianity practised by our *ci-devant* NUNS OF THE DESERT, and the WOODLAND WITCHES.

The consecrated temple of our friends, was the verdant lawn before the house ;
its

its walls, the surrounding variegated hills ; its roof, the spangled arch, which vaulted to the footstool of the Throne of Mercy. From hence, in a spiral direction, issued the effusion of congenial hearts. From hence, the pure breathings of true Christian souls arose, and pierced the veil which separates GOD from Man. From hence, in *silent* awe ascended, that sacrifice acceptable—The LOVE of MAN to GOD !

CHAP. XIII.

The Seraglio.—The Vizier.—The favourite Sultana.—The Manœuvres of Vanessa.—The Captives made happy.

WE hope our readers have sufficient regard for Horatio Congreve and his ship-mate, to attend our enquiry concerning the success of their enterprise. But what quarter of the earth or sea, shall we explore?

The date at which this chapter commences, is several months forwarder than that at which we closed the one preceding.

The Selwyns have lived the time in *heartless gaiety*. The Cottagers, in anxiety
and

and hope. The voyagers, in difficulties, dangers, and distress; all which, we are happy to say they have surmounted, and are now seated round a breakfast table, with Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, in an hotel in Oxford-street, London. It would be of little avail to move with the ship which conveyed the adventurers across the ocean; to give alarm to our readers, by depicting a storm, in which they were very near going to the bottom; by relating the difficulties, seemingly insuperable, through which they pressed, in endeavouring to effect their purpose; by painting the despair which overwhelmed Messieurs Congreve and Veerman, when they were informed, by some of the high and mighty ones of the Turkish empire, that the release of a Lady from the Seraglio was seldom known to have been effected; and never, but under a peculiar circumstance—that of having resided there, the Slave of Vanity, unnoticed by a Sultan, whose glory consisted in the *numbers* of the Ladies, more than

than in the beauty, that adorned his palace.

Twice before, this had been known to be the case; and this was *secretly* the case at present. Mrs. Blenheim, confined within the walls of the Seraglio, had scarcely ever seen the Emperor. His affection was absorbed by a sprightly Cyprian, known by the appellation of Vanessa, who ruled the Sovereign with almost despotic sway. One of the great officers of state, to whom the Turkish Ambassador had given Mr. Congreve letters of introduction, was high in his Lady's favour, and in the dress of a female slave, had been introduced to her apartment. To him, without knowing this circumstance, they applied. He listened, shook his head, and intimated that the case was desperate. Gold was the idol of this Vizier; a circumstance soon discovered by the hawk-eyed Veerman, whose management, after much toil in subduing difficulties, raised on purpose to enhance the price

of the service, effected the important design of their voyage.

Vanessa, to oblige her favourite, begged Mrs. Blenheim of the Grand Signior, as a companion; pretending to have found many charms in her conversation. After this, she affected jealousy; and being a woman of consummate art, quarrelled with the Sultan for having noticed her; and refused reconciliation, except Mrs. Blenheim was dismissed from the harem. For some time the contest was violent. Mrs. Blenheim, though not, as has been said, so handsome as Mrs. Selwyn, was exquisitely formed, and had those kind of features which frequently fascinate beyond mere beauty. While she was in the Seraglio, with the rest of the women, the Signior never distinguished her; but when brought forward by Vanessa, and the charms of her mind extolled, he observed her with distinction, and paid her peculiar attention: thus the very means which it
was

was supposed would effect her release, had nearly destroyed her every hope of future happiness, by dooming her to the arms of the Emperor.

And how frequently is this the case in common life ! How sedulous are we to compass a point—how murmur and repine, if we are disappointed—which, if attained, would render the completion of our wishes for ever impossible !

The matchless adroitness of Vanessa, stimulated rather than retarded by impediment, turned this very difficulty to advantage.

Secure of the power her art gave her over the Sultan, she persisted in her demand of Mrs. Blenheim's expulsion; vowing to revenge herself upon him by her own death, if she was refused. Weak in intellect, and fascinated by the coquetry and beauty of Vanessa, the Monarch smiled at what he deemed her jealousy, which gave him consequence ; and when, by his favourite's contrivance, Mrs. Blenheim

disappeared, passed over the circumstance of her absence without notice.

Mrs. Blenheim once more in freedom, the release of her husband was easily effected; that being a business of common bargain and sale. The ransom was considerable, but not beyond compass of the power of our two plenipotentiaries.

And now—shall we open an entrance to a view of the meeting between the faithful—the affectionate—the long separated wife and husband, now, after years of captivity, in perfect freedom?

No; it would indeed beggar all description.

We will, therefore, only see them clasped in each other's arms, in speechless transport; leaving a *tender*—a *pure*—a PIOUS imagination to do its office—and close the scene.

CHAP. XIV.

Mr. Wilmot visits Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn.

Lawson's Hotel.

Oxford-street, London.

RESEATED round a breakfast-table, at the place of our date, we must assist the council to determine upon the proper method of conveying the intelligence of the arrival, upon British ground, of Mr. Congreve and Mr. Veerman, with Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, to their ardently expecting friends.

Our two ambassadors, apprehensive of

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overwhelming, by a too flowing tide of information, the weakened spirits of the ransomed pair, forbore to acquaint them with the treachery of the Selwyns, till they were upon their voyage for the land, where Freedom has fixed her standard. Mr. Wilmot they acknowledged as their employer, but affected ignorance of other circumstances.

When they were upon the Mediterranean, sailing with a pleasant gale, they ventured a disclosure of Mr. Wilmot's *suspicion* of Mr. Selwyn's atrocity; which, as they would not gain the credence of their auditors to suspicion only, they were at length obliged to confirm, to the great—the *distressful* amazement of both the gentleman and lady; but still they kept Aurora in the back ground of the picture.

After they had, in some degree, recovered the shock from this first piece of information, Mr. Veerman invited Mr. Blenheim to walk the deck, while Mr. Congreve detained his lady in the cabin; and after
due

due preparation, they unfolded, each to his companion, the story of their daughter's pretended death, and subsequent situation; they had therefore every circumstance before them, when they entered upon the consultation, and though the hearts of the parents throbbed with impatience to fold their daughter in their arms, they listened to the remonstrance of their advisers to permit a letter to be sent express to Mr. Wilmot, that he might prepare the party at the Cottage to expect the voyagers.

That this letter caused the height of transport to those interested in the event, it is not necessary to observe. In the bosom of Miss Blenheim, it occasioned a *tumult*—not of contending, but of *associating* passions. She wished to fly, that she might throw herself at the feet of her parents—that she might welcome the return of Mr. Congreve. But she was prevailed upon to remove to Mr. Wilmot's, there to wait the arrival of those she was so impatient to behold.

Ferdinand refused every persuasion to remain in the country till he saw his brother. The instant he heard of his arrival, he flew to Sophia, pressed her to his breast in almost silent rapture, and darted forward with swiftness, nor stopped till he reached the hotel.

Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim were charmed with the twin-brothers; gave a glad and grateful consent to the intended union of Horatio and Aurora; engaged to espouse the cause, both of the Congreves and the Misses Selwyn; to provide for Selina Rosemont; to fix in easy circumstances, Mr. Veerman and Fanny Hood; and to render the Woodland Witches, with the laughing Anna, who seemed disposed to attach herself to Emily Selwyn and Selina, as happy as money and power could make them: but the inevitable disgrace of the usurpers of Ivy Tower, was an idea shocking to their benevolence. Waked to new existence, by a release from many long and painful years of captivity—still more enlivened

enlivened to the dear relations of humanity, by the recovery of an only—consequently, of a darling child ; the loss of which had been the occasion of their leaving their natal shore—they wished to be the means of conveying a portion of their own now overflowing cup of felicity to every one, of whom they had any knowledge ; particularly to those with whom they had lived in habits of intimacy and friendship, and whom, from their own guileless hearts, they had considered as friends ; for which reason, the criminality of the Selwyns—barring, as it inevitably must do, all future social intercourse—was doubly deplored by both the parties which had been so notoriously abused. Instead of having been *embittered* by adversity, they were softened thereby to the tender kindness of infancy ; and though they were determined that the utmost justice should be done to the Congreves and the Misses Selwyn, they likewise declared that they would not, were proofs against them ever so strong, punish

the delinquents further than it was necessary so to do, to right the injured.

As soon as it was settled that Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim were to go to the house of Justice Wilmot, his Worship waited upon the Selwyns, with the news of his having received intelligence of their being in captivity in Constantinople; and that their ransom might easily be procured, if a sum sufficient for that purpose could be raised and transmitted to the British Ambassador, then resident at the Porte.

No surprise, depicted by poet, prose-writer, or painter, ever equalled that which seized the culprits on this address from the Justice. They stared as if they had seen a dozen ghosts issue from the walls of their apartment, and, for some moments, were utterly unable to articulate a syllable.

At length, William found the use of speech, and, with more effrontery than ever any other young man of his years was master of, said, the credulity of his Worship was one of the most wonderful

circumstances that ever in his life he had witnessed ; that the letters he had received were obvious forgeries, and the application villanous ; as it was a fact, well ascertained, that Mr. Blenheim had died of a fever in his passage from Palermo, from which place his last letters were dated, and that the lady survived him but three weeks ; that authentic accounts of these events were transmitted by the master of the vessel, whose name was Willet, and who, if he were in England, should be summoned to vouch the truth of his own despatches, and to acknowledge his own signature to the letters, which were in his father's *escritoir* in London ; that he would instantly set off to bring them to Ivetsey, and to procure, if possible, Mr. Willet's personal attendance ; that if Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, one or both, were still living, they would be welcomed to the Tower with rapture by all present ; and that, were there the shadow of a hope of their being in captivity, and that *money* would procure their enlargement, he himself

would sail with the first ship—upon the wings of the wind if possible—to conduct their return to their native isle; that he trusted, Mr. Wilmot would not impute the coolness, with which the proposal was received by his father and mother, to any want of general benevolence, or individual affection for their cousins; but to the true and real cause, which was a knowledge of the imposition, and a detestation of the abuse of the noblest faculties of man.

This was the sum of the harangue which was given from the lips of William Selwyn, to the astonishment, not only of the Justice, but even of his father and his mother.

The readiness of his invention, and the greatness of his assurance, were equal subjects of admiration.

William Selwyn's intention of going to London, was to prepare some letters for the perusal of his Worship, and to get a certificate of the death of Captain Willet, who had been acquainted with his father
while

while in the service of a Turkey merchant, and who had been dead about six months; all which darted through the mind of this young fabricator with the rapidity of lightning, and so well had he arranged the particulars of his tale, that the credence of Mr. Wilmot would inevitably have followed his words, had he not been fortified by prior contra conviction.

Dissembling, however, his sentiments, the Justice joined with the speaker in deprecating the influence of such atrocity; expressed his astonishment at the circumstance; wished he could fathom the design; and kept up a conversation on the subject, till the *expected* arrival of an express messenger, with letters from Mr. Blenheim, importing his being landed on the British coast; and that, as he had several times written to Mr. Selwyn, and not received any answer—which gave him to suppose, he might, if alive, have left Ivetsey—he would take the liberty of visiting the Lodge;

as soon as Mrs. Blenheim could bear the motion of a carriage; and ended with requesting a line of answer by the messenger as he could not yet say where a letter would find him by the post, not being fixed in any lodgings.

The date of the above was simply that of the year and month.

It might be supposed that the gentry of Ivy Tower would now have found themselves at their *ne plus ultra*; but William Selwyn had still a resort.

He advanced, that these applicants were most undoubtedly some swindlers, who, from their knowledge of circumstances, intended to personate the Blenheims; alledging, to any objection respecting their identity, their having been altered in their appearance by the severity of their situation.

“Well, Sir,” replied the Justice, “this business must be investigated. If Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim should positively and incontrovertibly

incontrovertibly appear, each in *propria persona*, the path of procedure will be obvious."

"Most certainly so!" exclaimed Mr. Selwyn, desirous to end the conversation, and rising from his seat, caught, in a well-feigned rapture, the hand of Mr. Wilmot—"most certainly so; and most glad will be every one present to witness a resurrection from the grave of friends, whose loss we have so long and so sincerely lamented. The moment they appear, we will return to Beech Grove, which, as if Providence directed it should be, is now, by the death of Colonel Warner, unoccupied; and rejoice in this re-union, as one of the most blest events of our existence."

William gave his hearty amen to the speech of his sire, and threw into his eyes a portion of apparent gladness; but the art of Mrs. Selwyn failed her: she had too much grief at heart to make even a decent show of rejoicing at the recovery of her friends,

friends; yet too greedy of hearing, what might afford room for hope of the falsity of the tale, to retire.

The servant of Mr. Wilmot was now, by universal desire, ordered to appear in the drawing-room, where inquiries were made respecting the messenger; such as, from whence he came, to what place he had orders to return, *et cetera*; but to the disappointment, not of the Justice, but of the Selwyns, information was given of the messenger having only stopped to drink a cup of ale, as he said he had orders to return immediately; and that, as Miss Wilmot was from home, nobody had asked him any questions of that kind, as not knowing it was necessary.

All this, by the management of Sir James Maynard, was literally the case; it being requisite that the usurpers should be kept in ignorance of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, till they should publicly appear in Ivetsey.

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The Justice now departed, leaving the Selwyns to their own—not very agreeable—consultation.

CHAP. XV.

Perturbation at Ivy Tower.—And the Meeting of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim with their Daughter.

THE Lodge, which was the place of Mr. Wilmot's residence, was a handsome, large, old-fashioned building; standing in the midst of what had formerly been a park, but was now divided into agricultural enclosures. Its situation was extremely pleasant, as it overlooked a large tract of ground,

ground, beautifully diversified by the divisions, devoted, some of them to grazing, some to the production of different kinds of grain ; but the house was only approachable by two roads, the one to the south, the other northward ; both between two straight rows of trees, that gave a view from the building to the entrance of each, which was at a considerable distance.

To this asylum, Miss Blenheim was, at the hour of midnight, secretly conveyed ; it being judged dangerous for her to appear in open day, lest Mr. Selwyn, made perhaps desperate by circumstances, should, if once he knew where she existed, seize her with an armed power, and secure her beyond recovery ; which was the reason why she was not permitted to meet her friends in London.

Every thing was now in readiness at the Lodge to receive the quondam captives. Their return was formally announced throughout the vicinity.

The Selwyns were now, what is vulgarly termed,

termed, *in the dumps* ; but were obliged, for the sake of decency, to appear with a tolerably cheerful aspect, and to order for their own reception at Beech Grove.

Strict search was made, *almost round the kingdom*, for LAVINIA ROSEMONT—the residence of Horatio Congreve—the retreat of the Misses Selwyn—particulars respecting the death of Mr. Veerman—all with the most anxious sedulity, endeavoured to be explored and investigated; and all with the same destitution of success.

The man who had given the account of the *decease*—as they interpreted the intended witticism on the word *death*—of Donald Veerman, was no where to be found. His other former intimates had not heard any thing of him for several months. No tidings of him could any where be gained: nor had his annuity been demanded. *He*, therefore, they concluded, certainly *was* dead! No fear, therefore, of *Lavinia Rosemont*.

Veerman's letters, papers, &c. might
indeed

indeed have fallen into aukward hands; yet who could vouch for their verity! And who, even were the circumstances known to his executors, could ascertain the identity of *this devilish girl*!

This was their language—these, their positions and conclusions; yet still unsatisfactory. Then, sure there was no other children to *edge* them out of the estate?

No, no: certainly, no. If there had, Old Wilmot would doubtless have heard of, and mentioned them. Thus passed day after day, in constant expectation of the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim; who now in secret, at a late hour, were joyfully received at the mansion of Mr. Wilmot, and by that gentleman immediately recognised.

Mrs. Blenheim, at this period just turned forty-three—her husband two years her senior—had that complexion, and those kind of features, which, as in early life they exhibited an appearance of maturity, so now, at a more advanced age, they maintained

maintained the *same* appearance; and having, by her late heart-ease, recovered her *countenance*, she looked very little altered from what she was when she left Ivetsey.

Mr. Blenheim was *exactly* the same. If there *was any* alteration, it was in his favour, and that he was still handsomer than before he sailed from England.

Mr. Wilmot, the moment he saw them, could have attested their identity; which gave him the more peculiar pleasure, as the circumstance must at once prevent any hesitation in the Selwyns to quit possession of Ivy Tower; and likewise corroborate Mr. Veerman's deposition of LAVINIA ROSEMONT being the veritable AURORA BLENHEIM; for never was there seen a daughter who bore a stronger resemblance to a father. The same lovely, dignified, yet sweet and smiling countenance; the same brilliant, yet soft and beautiful dark brown eye. The same glow of complexion, elegance of feature, form, and manner;
her

her temper, her tone of voice, were the same ; and her teeth, like his, small, white, and regular.

When Aurora first heard the rattling of the expected carriage, her fortitude, which she had been endeavouring to collect, entirely forsook her, and she sank on the breast of Miss Wilmot ; Sir James Maynard and the Justice being gone to receive the agitated parents, who were conducted into a lower apartment.

Miss Wilmot, scarcely able to support her trembling burthen, was endeavouring to reach the cord of the bell, when she was relieved from her office by Horatio Congreve, who, almost before he was seen, prevented Miss Blenheim from falling, by clasping his arms around her, kneeling by her side upon one knee. Instantly her face was hidden in his bosom, but not a syllable was uttered by either ; and Miss Wilmot, affected by the scene, sat perfectly still, and equally incapable of speaking.

At length, a violent burst of tears relieved
the

the over-charged heart of Miss Blenheim, and in a few moments, she exclaimed—“ Oh, my dear Mr. Congreve ! lead me, lead me to the feet of my FATHER and my MOTHER ! ” With emphasis she spoke the words, as if the blest idea of *having* a father and a mother, absorbed all the powers of her soul.

At that moment, Mr. Wilmot, attended by Mr. Veerman, appeared to conduct the hitherto orphan beauty to the anxiously expecting parents, whose hearts now throbbed at the sound of every footstep ; so deeply affected were they, by the idea of folding in their arms, their long-lost and for years deplored Aurora.

When they first alighted at the Lodge, Mrs. Blenheim was with difficulty kept from fainting. “ Where *is* she ! Where *is* she ! Is she *here* ? ” were the first words she uttered, after having, with impatience, replied her thanks to Mr. Wilmot’s hearty welcome and congratulation. On being told she was above stairs with Miss Wilmot, she
cried

cried—" Oh, let me see her *this moment* ! Do not, do not delay—do not keep her from me !" but Mr. Wilmot perceiving her to be so much agitated, and seeing Mr. Blenheim walk about the room in *speechless* affection, he entreated her for a few moments to endeavour to compose herself, lest the unrestrained violence of her emotion should be too much for the susceptible heart of her daughter.

" DAUGHTER !" repeated she, with almost wildness in her accent, as having been affected by the phrase. " And have I then a *daughter* to bless my days ? How, how shall I ever pay my debt of gratitude ! "

" Eliza," said Mr. Blenheim, " do be advised. Let us endeavour to tranquillise our minds, before we attempt to see our beloved child ; lest, as Mr. Wilmot observes, an overflow of tender sensibility should injure her, whom we both hold so dear."

Mrs. Blenheim was at length prevailed upon to endeavour to subdue the fervour of her spirit, and sat down by her husband,
while

while the Justice said—"And now, Madam, let me lead your imagination to the *person* of the lovely girl, whose image must necessarily press upon the eye of your mind as *what she was when you lost her*; whereas, she is now about your own height, and lovely as an angel. I think it *necessary* to say this, that surprise upon seeing her so tall, may not suspend your delight."

Mr. Wilmot evinced his knowledge of the human mind, when he talked to Mrs. Blenheim as above. He wanted to *familiarize* the idea of Aurora, that she might not appear as a *stranger* to her parents, and added a few words more as to the *particulars* of her person and appearance; which, moreover, gave time for Mr. Congreve to present himself to her, before her interview with her parents. And now to ease anxiety, and end suspense, he arose, and taking Mr. Veerman with him, ascended to the apartment of the ladies, where, seeing Miss Blenheim so much affected, he said, "My lovely ward, I call upon you

to summon your fortitude. These few minutes I have allowed to you and your parents, that, after knowing yourselves to be under the same roof, you might prepare to meet each other. Mr. Congreve, you will assist Mr. Veerman to restore Miss Blenheim to her father and mother."

"Oh!" said Aurora, clasping her hands with devotional fervency, as she arose from her seat, "take me this moment, take me to my parents." Upon which, led by the two ambassadors, she walked with a trembling haste down the stairs. The door was opened by the Justice.

"My friends, your daughter," said he, as she entered the room. "Miss Blenheim, your *father* and your *mother*."

In an instant, the three were locked in each other's embrace, as Mr. Veerman was beginning to say—"Receive, Sir, and Madam, from me, the child of which I treacherously robbed you, &c.;" while the spectators—Mr. and Miss Wilmot, Mr. Congreve, Mr. Veerman, and Sir James Maynard—witnessed

witnessed the most affecting scene in nature. No circumstances could more deeply probe the heart—nothing that ever was exhibited by human agents, wind the soul up to higher feelings, than the realities which now passed before their overflowing eyes, for not one in the room was dry; not one, that did not give its tribute of tears to the painful happiness of the father, mother, and daughter.

Mr. Congreve stood in an attitude of suspense. He wished to be received into the embrace, but it appeared too *sacred* to be interrupted. Not a word was spoken. The faces of Mrs. and Miss Blenheim were joined, and together rested upon the breast of the almost entranced husband and father, while tears from his eyes in large drops, fell upon the cheeks of both, as he strained them in his arms.

At length, Mr. Congreve, fearing the violence of their transports might be really injurious to them all, advanced, and said,

“ I had hoped to be acknowledged as a son. How long must I be kept at an admiring distance from three persons to whom my heart is so strongly allied ? ”

This address had the desired effect of arresting the torrent of their feelings. The face of Aurora, who had almost forgotten that Horatio was in the room, now exhibited a damask rose. Raising her head from the bosom of her father, she gave Mr. Congreve a smile, that conveyed all he wished her to express. Recollection now restored the use of language.

Mr. Veerman made his atonement in a re-presentation of Miss Blenheim.

The atonement was accepted; he was termed her preserver, and moreover, with Mr. Congreve, treated with respect and gratitude, as being the immediate means of their own deliverance from captivity.

Still unsatisfied, the gentleman last-mentioned pressed the acknowledgment of a more particular recognition. It was granted.

granted. He was presented to Mr. Wilmot by the happy parents, as “the chosen of their daughter.”

“Aurora,” said the enraptured mother, “shall we already transfer our authority? before we enjoy our acquisition, shall we dispose of the blessing to another?”

“She will not be the less *yours*, for being *mine*,” said Mr. Congreve, preventing the reply of Miss Blenheim, as he seized her hand, and led her to her parents, who were now seated by each other. “Receive us *both* as children,” continued he, as they both kneeled at their feet; “and instead of the duty and affection of *one*, entitle yourselves to that of *two*.”

“May the GOD of Heaven bless my dear children,” said Mr. Blenheim, as he took a hand of each, and pressed them between his own. “Happy am I to have such a daughter to give; and happy to consign her to such a protection. May your union be speedy and permanent;

and may we rejoice in each other's felicity."

"Amen," said Mrs. Blenheim, smiling through her tears. "I mean all your father has said, though I cannot speak my sentiments, while my heart thus overflows;" upon which, she clasped her arms round the neck of her daughter, as those of the daughter encircled the mother's waist.

After this, our happy company began to converse with some little degree of composure; they were then summoned to a light and elegant supper, and sat till the morning began to appear, before a thought was given to the necessity of repose.

CHAP. XVI.

A Morning's Walk.—Mr. Congreve and Miss Blenheim in the Temple of Friendship.

THE happiness experienced by the inhabitants of the Woodland Cottage, was as sincere, though more serene, than that which gladdened the hearts of our friends at the Lodge.

Frederic Congreve left the coach as it entered the parish of Ivetsey, and taking a horse from one of the servants, proceeded to the humble dwelling of the secluded Sisters; where he was received by Sophia Selwyn with the joy of acknowledged affection,

affection, and by the rest of the Cottagers with the truest satisfaction. A recital of many circumstances kept them up till as late an hour as that at which Mr. Wilmot's company retired; consequently, it was late before they appeared at the next morning's breakfast.

The day ensuing was passed in peace, and in the sweetest harmony, by all the parties. The happy parents saw more of—and still more admired—their lovely daughter. The daughter found *such* parents as she wished to find, and warmly returned their fondest affection.

Mr. Congreve was transported beyond any description. He seemed almost at the summit of human felicity. Too blest to indulge long in drowsy forgetfulness, he arose in the morning before any other in the family was awake, and finding his way out of the house, directed his steps to the shrubbery, in the midst of which, was a temple dedicated to friendship.

The morning was lovely. The sun's first
rays

rays glittered on the top of the spire of a neighbouring steeple, which was seen through an opening of lofty shrubs. The matin of the lark saluted his ear, and heightened the fervour of his spirit.

“ Sweet chorister ! let me unite my orisons with thine,” said he. “ Let the effusions of my soul ascend with thy harmonious tones to our common Benefactor—to the Universal Father of every created being.”

“ Yes,” added he, after a pause—“ the neighing steed, the lowing herd, the feathered songsters, and the minutest insects, hear His voice, and live within His power. *They* give their tribute too of gratitude, and sing the praise of Him who called them into being. Shall MAN then—Father of All!—shall Man, the choicest of Thy Works Below, doubt Thy protecting Power, and think himself an outcast from Thy care !”

Forbid it, Gift Divine ! the power of
K 5 contemplating

contemplating on Thy works—forbid the desolating thought that Man is left a prey to Winds—to Waves—to Chance—to Angry Passions ! No ; there is a restraining hand—a hand outstretched in Love, that saves Man from *himself*, and gently guides him, if he *will* be guided, to safety—happiness—to Bliss Forever !

We were too much enrapt by contemplation on the only All-consoling Truth, which was the concluding subject of our last sentence, to attend to any other.

There *are* periods when the Soul is so fixed in its own proper element, that everything which is earthly, seems like dross.

For a considerable time, Mr. Congreve forgot even Aurora Blenheim, notwithstanding she was the origin of his elevation of sentiment. It was mortal love which carried him to Love Divine. It was affection for a creature which raised his adoration of the Creator.

Love,

Love, pure love, in its essence is the same, however different the object. Be hushed, therefore, ye profane ! and pollute not the sacred flame by unhallowed sentiments ; nor give a licence to your tongues to ridicule what you cannot understand. Love is above the comprehension of the licentious. It is founded in purity—it is united to Holiness ; and merits not its name, but when inseparable from PIETY.

As Mr. Congreve was rising from his seat, his eyes were arrested by a form which ever lived in his imagination. Too happy to sleep, Miss Blenheim likewise had awakened with the morning, and had repaired to the *un-roofed temple* to offer the effusions of her rapturously grateful heart ; which ascended with those of her beloved Horatio, and together pressed for admittance to that inexhaustible Fountain of Good, from whence all their felicity was derived.

As soon as he saw her, his heart bounded with an increase of rapture ; and *her* joy

was doubled when she perceived him descending from the temple. Too devoid of affected prudence to turn into a side glade, she directed her steps to meet him, as he quickened his pace to approach her. Their salutation was expressive of what passed in their hearts; yet she received, rather than imparted, sentiments of felicity; and her looks, more than her lips, confessed mutual affection.

Their subjects were various: Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, Sophia and Frederic, the Cottagers in general, were their themes. The Selwyns were not mentioned.

“You must prepare yourself, my dear Aurora,” said Mr. Congreve, “to encounter a request in my favour, before this day shall be terminated.”

She blushed. To avoid the appearance of affectation, she endeavoured to speak, but could not articulate a syllable.

“Let me hope,” continued he, “that my request will be granted without an opposing sentence.”

“What

“What—what—” she could say no more. Her presence of mind had forsaken her; still she blushed, and averted her face.

Horatio. “Why is my dearest girl thus silent? I hope to receive her not reluctant assent to be mine, before the expiration of another month.”

Aurora. “Before the expiration of another month! Mr. Congreve! How can you think of such a thing?”

Horatio. “Your father, your mother assent to what I propose. Why then should my more perfect happiness be delayed?”

Aurora. “Indeed you pain me by this precipitancy; because it pains me to refuse what you can ask; but remember, that it is my full resolve not to part with my new beloved name, before my dear Sophia can be my sister.”

Horatio. “Nor do I wish you should; the day which will give you to me, will likewise, I hope, unite my brother and Miss Selwyn.”

Aurora. “And how is it possible, that
5 that

that event can at present be thought of? No, no, Mr. Congreve, had you said, before the termination of another *year*—”

Horatio. “ Another *year* ! my dear Aurora. Talk of another *age*. You may as well. Another *YEAR* ! Heavens ! I would not live another year without you, for the value of both the Indies doubled !

Aurora. “ It is, however, time enough to talk of this circumstance sometime hence. The present period has already in it sufficient of hap—happiness, so that—that—”

Horatio. “ You will then, my dear novice, acknowledge that the celebration of the *nuptial* vow affords a view of happiness. For *that* [pressing her to his heart], I thank you. But say then, why the happiness that is within our power ought to be deferred ? You surely will not stand upon punctilio.

Aurora. “ Indeed I will not, Mr. Congreve. But let me again mention the friend of my heart—my dear Sophia. It is

is impossible that in the present situation of affairs she should—”

Horatio. “ Let me interrupt my Aurora, by asking this. Will you, when Sophia consents to be my brother’s, give yourself to me for ever ?”

Aurora. “ Oh, how you press this arduous subject ! That my heart is yours [trembling and blushing as she spake], I wish to acknowledge, without this appearance of reluctance ; but I am not now my own—Sophia *cannot* yet consent. Why then will you—”

Horatio. “ Again, my dearest girl, I interrupt you ; and repeat my question. If all the other parties give assent, will you alone persist in a refusal ?”

She could not say she *would*, and abashed by an attempt to say she *would not*, her head involuntarily rested on his shoulder.

He pressed her to his heart as she sat beside him, for by this time they had reached the Temple, and, with all the delicacy of pure affection, encouraged her
to

to speak her sentiments with unreserve. His treatment gave her confidence. She felt assured he might be trusted with even the whisperings of her mind.

Without seeming to intend it, he led her view to distant circumstances; and before she was aware, she found herself engaged in a conversation on future domestic and connubial happiness.

Thus sweetly passed the time, till recollection led them in to breakfast, where they found their congratulating friends already assembled. Every countenance expressed delight, and the day, as we have already observed, was spent in peace and harmony.

CHAP. XVI.

The Selwyns' Visit to the Lodge.—Their Meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim.—The Appearance of Aurora.—The Promptitude of the Son.—And the Father's Decision on the Fate of Miss Blenheim.

THE evening, which was rendered pleasant by the light of the moon at its full, carried the party from the Lodge to the Cottage; where, amongst other pleasing incidents, Sophia Selwyn was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim as the first, and dearest friend of their daughter's heart, and received

received by them with parental tenderness. Emily, likewise, and Selina Rosemont, were made happy by the kindest assurances of protection, and a universal confidence reigned around.

In the earlier part of the day, Frederic had been at Ivy Tower, where, by all but Fanny Hood, it was believed he spent his time at his bathing lodgings. He found the family reserved and gloomy, and understood from Fanny, that though they could not but apprehend they must of necessity quit the Tower, it was with the extremest reluctance they made any preparation for that removal. Still anxious to explore the retreat of Aurora, and to discover the residence of their daughters, they were continually restless, and alarmed with the appearance of every one who approached the gates.

Fanny, whose sense of hearing was particularly quick, and who did not scruple to catch their conversation, when she could do so undetected, frequently
overheard

overheard their private debates on the cause of the family embarrassments ; and being desirous, in some measure, to impede their search, intimated to Mrs. Selwyn, the probability that Sophia and Emily had withdrawn from Lexton, and retired to some other convent, under an assumed name, that they might not be necessitated to take the vow.

This conjecture appeared so reasonable, that it was immediately diffused and adopted ; yet still the—" Who could assist them, and provide them with money ?"—remained unanswered. Horatio Congreve was the only one, on whom conjecture could possibly rest for a moment. Yet where could *he* get money ? And *why* should he embark in such a hazardous enterprize ?

To oblige *Lavinia Rosemont*—was the reply to the above questionnaire objection ; and the money doubtless raised at exorbitant interest, on an estate which—which—*It was hoped he never would possess.*

That

That was the continuance of the speech, which conscience retained upon their lips.

The visits of Ferdinand to the Tower were never marked with welcome. The Selwyns who, though he would not own any knowledge of his brother's destination, could not, at times, but believe him to be privy to his schemes, were glad of his absence; therefore, they more liberally answered his demand of money.

And now a card of compliment arrived at Ivy Tower.

“ Mr. Wilmot has the pleasure of informing Mr., Mrs., and Mr. William Selwyn, that Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim reached the Lodge at a late hour in the night, in perfect health and high spirits. Mr. and Miss W. therefore expect Mr., Mrs., and Mr. William S. will favour them with their company, this day, at dinner.”

This

This invitation occasioned an uproar in the lady's dressing-room, where the trio were assembled. In every expression of rage and malice, they vented the bitterness of their spirits. But go they must. There was no decent alternative: therefore, without a recapitulation of their almost blasphemous conversation, we will accompany them to the habitation of Justice Wilmot, where they were received with politeness.

The meeting between Mr. Blenheim and Mr. Selwyn was on both sides confused. To an uninformed spectator, it might have appeared the effect of renewed friendship that had long been interrupted. Those who knew "the trick of the scene," would perceive conscious feculence in the manner of Mr. Selwyn; in that of Mr. Blenheim, a combination of angry passions suppressed.

When the ladies approached each other, Mrs. Blenheim burst into tears. Mrs. Selwyn *pretended* to be affected in a similar manner.

manner. William Selwyn was all himself—what has subsequently been termed A CHESTERFIELDIAN.

Sir James Maynard made an addition to the company. Aurora was invisible; as was, likewise, Horatio Congreve.

After dinner, Sir James led the conversation to the subject of different ideas of beauty, in different countries; upon which every one giving some peculiar opinion, he said—

“ Well may distant countries differ in their sentiments of beauty, when we, in this little company, cannot agree to fix the standard; but I think, Miss Wilmot, your new attendant would concentrate ideas of perfect loveliness.”

Miss Wilmot. “ She is indeed extremely handsome. For face and form united, I never saw her surpassed.”

William Selwyn. “ Has she been long with you, Madam? And do you keep her from public view?”

Miss

Miss Wilmot. “ She has been at the Lodge about a week, Sir; and it is her own wish to live retired.”

Mrs. Blenheim. “ I never before saw so lovely a creature. When she attended upon me last night, I was so charmed by her manner, as well as appearance, that I saw her leave the room with reluctance.

Mr. Blenheim. “ She is indeed uncommonly handsome, and wins upon the senses so fast, that she steals even the *affection*.”

William Selwyn. “ Cannot one see this paragon, Miss Wilmot? Or is it from *charitable* motives you consent to her seclusion?”

Mr. Wilmot. “ I am an old fellow, young man, but I have not outlived remembrance; take my advice, and see her not.”

William Selwyn. “ Oh, I fear no danger. If she should prove a thief, and steal my heart, I will arraign her before your Worship.”

Sir James. “ And demand *her* heart in retribution.”

William

William Selwyn. “Spoken wisely, Sir James. His Worship, I know, is an advocate for commutative justice. But what, Miss Wilmot, is the age of your nonpareil? Is her beauty in bud, or full blossom?”

Miss Wilmot. “I believe she was twenty-one, about three months back. She told me so, I think, last night.”

Mrs. Selwyn. “Of what parentage is this young woman, Madam? Has she any fortune to support the beauty of which you say she is possessed? If not, she had better be without that advantage.”

Mr. Selwyn. “True; beauty without property is a dangerous possession.”

Miss Wilmot. “Not, I think, Mr. Selwyn, when it has such a mind annexed to it as *Matilda's*.”

Mrs. Selwyn. “Matilda! Is her name Matilda? It is a mighty fine name, methinks, for a waiting-woman.”

Mr. Wilmot. “She was recommended to my daughter by an acquaintance of mine, who lived in London. To me,
there

there appears something mysterious respecting the circumstances of her birth. Matilda is not a *very* uncommon name, but I do not think it was given to her at her baptism."

William Selwyn. "Indeed! There is then something invitingly romantic about her. Do Miss Wilmot, let us see this princess in disguise."

Miss Wilmot (ringing the bell). "If you will be humoured, take the consequence; and remember I warn you to guard your heart. (*To the servant*) Desire Matilda to bring down my embroidery."

Sir James. "The girl appears to be very modest, Selwyn. Do not, therefore, fix your eye upon her when she enters, with that earnestness with which you now look towards the door."

William Selwyn. "I wish to see her blushes, Sir."

Miss Blenheim enters. The Selwyns sit aghast. Miss Blenheim, in great confusion, and without looking at the company,

advances, gives the embroidery to Miss Wilmot, then curtseys, and retires.

Sir James. “Why, Selwyn, you seem thunderstruck. Is your heart gone at one glance?”

William Selwyn. “I am thunderstruck, Sir.”

For a few minutes, perfect silence reigned: at length, William Selwyn, with that presence of mind for which he was remarkable, said—“I have seen that face before.”

To which, Mr. Wilmot and Sir James Maynard, in the same moment, exclaimed—“*Indeed!*” And Miss Wilmot said, “Where can you have seen her?”

William Selwyn. “Pardon me, Madam; but now I warn *you*. No; Matilda is *not* her name: nor is it the first, nor the second, by which she has been distinguished.”

Miss Wilmot. “You amaze me, Sir! I hope there is not any thing amiss in her character.”

William Selwyn. Do not alarm yourself,
my

my dear Madam. Amiss ! Yes ; but nothing I hope that can affect *you*. However, you will not *long* be troubled with her. *Mark my words*—She will not be at the Lodge another month. Twice has she suddenly decamped from situations in which she might have lived happily all her life. And twice has she——But I ask pardon. My fervour to spare you disturbance, leads me too far. I beg—nay, permit me to say, I *insist* upon your promise not to mention one syllable of what I too incautiously have said. She may have repented, and may be good hereafter ; in which case, it would be *shocking* to prevent the growth of such principles as she may imbibe at the Lodge. *If* she continues with you, it will be an earnest of her return to rectitude ; but I fear—I *fear* she will soon again be wandering.”

The invincible effrontery of this young gentleman astonished the whole circle. Even his worthy parents, whom the unexpected appearance of the injured Aurora

had thrown into speechless consternation, sat suspended in admiration of his matchless inventive impudence ; but, in some measure, recovering themselves by means of his defamatory assertions, they shook their heads, blamed him for having spoken so freely of a perhaps unhappy young woman ; whose advanced guiltiness they, however, confirmed by looks, shrugs, and half sentences ; then charitably desired a change of subject. .

A change took place. The Misses Selwyns, who, the mother had told Mrs. Blenheim, were in a convent under their probation, were more particularly enquired after by Mr. Blenheim.

The Congreves were mentioned by Sir James Maynard, and spoken of by Mr. Selwyn as objects of compassion, from the shattered state of their family affairs, which left them dependant on his bounty.

The Wilmots, the Blenheims, and the Baronet, looked upon each other in silent amazement. The turn of their countenances

was

was caught by the eye of Mr. Selwyn, into whose heart it struck a panic.

“All is not well!” said he to himself, “We must be quick in our resolves, and strike a bold stroke without delay, or else—”

He walked out of the room, and in five minutes resolved upon his measures, which were—immediately to repair to Beech Grove, that they might be at liberty to pursue their purposes, and then to seize, without delay, the person of Aurora Blenheim, convey her to some distant monastery, and by means of a large sum of money, procure her instant admission to the veil. Thus determined, he returned to the company, and looking on his wife and son, with a meaning which they perfectly understood, declared his intended arrangements with respect to residence; invited the party present to dine at the Tower the next day; in the evening of which, he should repair to the Grove, where the furniture that always had been

let with the premises, would answer their purposes, till they could purchase some of more modern description.

Mr. Blenheim expressed his surprise at Mr. Selwyn's haste, and desired he would take time to render his return to Beech Grove convenient and agreeable to himself and his family.

Mrs. Selwyn joined in the sentiment of her husband, that the situation of the house was sufficiently convenient for present accommodation; and that the sooner they fixed themselves there, in her opinion, the better, as they should have the summer before them to render things more complete.

The suggestion was allowed. The Selwyns departed, and left Mr. Wilmot to the enjoyment of his more congenial companions.

CHAP. XVIII.

Reasonings on false Premises.—The Removal of the Selwyns from the Tower to the Grove.

SHALL we follow the Selwyns: Or abide with the Blenheims? Shall we enter into the fearful chagrin of the former: Or partake the serene felicity of the latter?

Inclination votes for the last: Business, for the other. At the Lodge, no new incident requires our attendance.

At the Tower, all was bustle, and contrivance, and plots, and management. Aurora was of age. *That was the d-v-l!* Live or die—at twenty-one, she could

bequeath the estate. It was a d——d clause in old Haye's will.

However, it was clear the Blenheims had no idea of the girl's being their daughter; nor had the girl herself, or the Wilmots, any knowledge of her origin. But that *look* which went round the table, when the Congreves were mentioned? Yet what could *that* mean? That could not be any way connected with the girl. Beside, it might be merely fancy. And most probably it was.

At any rate, the girl must be secured; and that without the least delay. It would be an easy matter to effect, after they should be settled at the Grove. And no other day would be so proper to carry her off, as on a Sunday; for if she went to church, the father and son in disguise, assisted by four men, who could easily be procured from London, and might lie in the Forest on the preceding Saturday night, could take her without difficulty. And if she staid at home, and the family went,
the

the matter would be rendered still more easy, as Mr. Wilmot never left many servants at home on that day.

It was a d——d strange thing, that the particulars of Veerman's death could not be collected. However, the fellow *was* dead, and that was sufficient.

This was the sum of their reasonings; and according to their projected plan, they regulated their motions.

At the Lodge, after the Selwyns disappeared, Horace and Ferdinand Congreve made a desirable addition to the company, and many minute particulars of future proceedings were canvassed. The incidents of the day—the confusion of the delinquents on the entrance of Miss Blenheim—the amazing assurance of William, and his readiness of invention, were themes of conversation.

They then endeavoured to conjecture what plan it was likely the Selwyns would now pursue with respect to Aurora; and when it was told Horace Congreve, what

Mr. William had said, relative to her not being another month at the Lodge, he seemed convinced that they would endeavour to seize and carry her off; probably, he said, to some convent in France.

This suggestion struck the hearts of the anxious parents. They dreaded her being one moment from under their own eye, and almost determined not to leave her, when they should go the next day to the Tower; but upon its being settled that Mr. Veerman should be sent for that night; that the Congreves would continue at the Lodge; and that they would not take more servants with them than was absolutely necessary, their fears were allayed, and the design carried into execution.

In the visit to Ivy Tower, nothing passed but common occurrences. On the side of the Selwyns, all was over-acted gaiety; on that of the Blenheims, suppressed anxiety and smothered resentment.

The former, in the presence of Mr. Wilmot, his daughter, and Sir James Maynard, relinquished

relinquished possession of Ivy Tower, and the others were reinstated in their magnificent habitation.

Mr. Selwyn offered to leave some of the servants, till Mr. Blenheim could supply himself with new ones; but the kindness of Mr. Wilmot and Sir James Maynard, rendered the acceptance of the proposal unnecessary; as it had been previously agreed that some of each sex, from the families of the gentlemen last-mentioned, should assist in the business of the Tower; which, with some who had attended Mr. Blenheim from London, together with two or three respectable people in the neighbourhood, who gladly accepted the offered situations, their household, for the present, was sufficiently complete; so that, at eight o'clock in the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, their son William, and remaining domestics (some of them having been previously sent to forward the necessary preparations), left Ivy Tower, and refixed themselves in their less splendid, but still

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elegant

elegant mansion of Beech Grove: having agreed that all pecuniary accounts should be adjusted at an ensuing period, through the medium of the Justice and the Baronet.

As soon as the Selwyns were departed, a messenger was despatched to the Lodge, to summon from thence, Miss Blenheim, Messieurs Congreve, and Mr. Veerman, all of whom arrived at the Tower between eleven and twelve; after which, they passed a happy hour, and then retired to taste the sweets of undisturbed repose.

And now let us contemplate the felicity of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, who, after many years of dark and almost hopeless distress, are unexpectedly restored to every circumstance that, in this sublunary abode, can render existence pleasurable—A large unincumbered estate, by legal and equitable inheritance—A fame unsullied—An affection for, and a confidence in, each other entire—A daughter, the heiress to their possessions, lovely as the morning, and as wise, and as good, as beautiful.

Who

Who can they envy? By whom are they not enviable? The fair Aurora next demands congratulation. Nurtured by the hand of strangers, and ignorant of her origin, her susceptible young heart soon began to sigh under an impression of being an outcast from her parents, of whom no mention was ever made in her hearing.

Subsequent to the dawning of her reason, she was carried to the Convent in the Desert, where she contracted an ardent friendship for the daughter of her inveterate enemy; was introduced as her most favoured companion, at Ivy Tower; where, but for the intervention of a Providence, peculiar and benign, she had, by the Tarquin Selwyn, been levelled with the most wretched of her sex.

Providence!!! Yes, Providence! Oh! you learned casuists! whose wisdom, most profound, admits not of any power superior to that sublime particle of reason which you so misuse, tell us, by whom you

were endued with sapience so profound. Did Mother Earth infuse sublimity into your minds? Did She—who nothing thinks, nor nothing knows, breathe forth philosophy, and bid her sons be wise? If not from Her, from whence proceeds your magazine of wisdom—your science which explores earth, seas, and heavens—which tells the doubting mind THERE IS A WORLD TO COME?

From whence? From HIM, whose teaching you disclaim! Whose precepts scorn! Whose Providence disown! Whose Being half deny! Aye, *half* deny!—for lives there, on this mouldering earth, a wretch so sunk—so lost—so totally *un-reasoned* as to say, *There is no Power Divine!*—no *Guardian Deity!*——No FATHER! GOD! Creator of Mankind!!!

Ah, no! The assertion dies upon your lips; and while you fain would boldly speak, your hearts, appalled, refuse their wonted aid, while fear—pale fear, bids silence end the speech.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

*The Charms of Insensibility.—An Arithmetical
Account of the Happiness of Aurora carried
to its Sum total.—Fanny dispatched to
Ivy Tower for Intelligence.*

OUR readers all well know, that, by the fervor of our spirits, we are often transported beyond the bounds of what may be termed propriety. All we can do, is to ask pardon for the effects of an effervescence which we are unable to suppress, without doing a most injurious violence to our nature.

Forgive us, therefore, O ye temperate
minds!

minds ! whose spirits flow in that even, regular course, which cannot be unduly perturbed by either the mirth or the melancholy, the joy or the sorrow of *other people*—a term which ye generally bestow upon those, with whose interest your own is not immediately concerned. *Your* souls, superior to the trifles by which those of *our* texture are wafted beyond the boundaries of limited space, cannot but pity the hazardous flights by which we expose ourselves to the danger of falling, in your opinion, into the deepest abyss of contempt.

The death of even a husband, a wife, or a child, cannot ruffle the smooth surface of your minds for more than a second. You animadvert—you sigh—you reconcile. Your friend is gone—He cannot be recalled. You wipe the tear which perchance may moisten your eye, and return to your wonted vocations. Oh ! for that lappy—we recall the word—that tranquil insensibility to neutralize the poignancy
of

of our affection under those circumstances of either joy or grief, which distinguishes those favoured mortals who are exempt from being distracted by either hope or fear, and from experiencing the torments of true sympathy.

And now, shall we revert to matters of fact? Or shall we conclude the chapter with sentimentals?

The chapter is not yet of a decent length, and it does not contain *anything*; we will, therefore, again bring Miss Blenheim forward in the page, as her re-appearance may bribe, at least, our masculine readers to be lenient in their strictures.

At Ivy Tower, Miss Blenheim first experienced real happiness. At Ivy Tower, she first knew real distress; and her return to the Convent preceded heartfelt wretchedness. Long did she languish under an impression of being deserted both by her lover and her friend; her intellects, during that period, being too much deranged to be entrusted with the secret which would
have

have consoled her, lest, in the wildness of her frenzy, she should have talked of what it would not have been proper should be divulged.

For several years, Miss Blenheim might truly be deemed an orphan. She never experienced the sweets of parental tenderness, nor the solace of individual friendship. Mr. Veerman was the earliest in her remembrance. She had often seen him, while under the care of his mother, and it was him who conducted her to the Convent: his re-appearance, therefore, at the Cottage, in the light of her preserving friend, was particularly grateful to her. She never considered his having been the means of her infantile misfortunes, but received him with gratitude and respect, as a man who had now determined to be virtuous.

Selina Rosemont, indeed, she had ever loved with the fond affection of a sister, but the timid Selina had ever looked up to Aurora as to a superior, which precluded
that

that *equal* sympathy which is the soul of friendship ; nor could Miss Blenheim, with all her condescending sweetness, prevent the other from paying her this deference. But the picture, which we now present to the reader, gives Miss Blenheim in the height of human happiness. A father—a mother—a friend—a lover, in every respect, what her heart could wish ; with the power of conferring benefits on all those whom she most valued.

Selina Rosemont would be rendered as happy as circumstances could make her. Her beloved friend, and Emily were under the protection of her parents. Horace and Ferdinand Congreve would now receive their rightful inheritance. Mr. Veerman would be remunerated, and made happy with Fanny Hood. The Cottagers rewarded ; and every comfort conveyed to the friendly Portress that she could receive, in the happy prospects of her daughters.

These were amongst the comforts which gilded the present day of Aurora Blenheim.

But

But these were not *all* her comforts: Sophia Selwyn, whom better than herself she loved, would, in all probability, form the felicity of Ferdinand Congreve.

AND—it *must* be—it *was*, almost more than all the rest—she, herself, would be given to her beloved Horatio. *Her* parents would be *his* parents; and *his* brother, *her* brother. It would be her *duty* to study his happiness: *she* should live for *him*, and *he* would live for *her*. Blest considerations! What in this world could exceed them? Nothing!

Heaven *only* could be superior to such rapturous prospects of pure felicity.

The country now resounded with the return of Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, who were almost idolized in the parish of Ivetsey and its environs; while the Selwyns were ever held in the utmost detestation, for their pride, rapacity, and oppression—so diametrically opposite to the gentleness, generosity, and benevolence of the Blenheims. These qualities, which distinguished them

them before their misfortunes, had, by the severity of their destiny, acquired a higher lustre ; their hearts, softened by the experience of grief, melted at the view or recital of the distresses of others ; consequently, one of their greatest delights was to relieve the first sighs of the afflicted. In this most exalted avocation, they were aided by all those whom we mentioned at the close of the last chapter, as well as by Mr. and Miss Wilmot, and the worthy Baronet ; who were all in the *habits* of benevolence to the extent of their individual power.

Gentry, from every corner of the country, now crowded to Ivy Tower with congratulatory compliments, in which the Selwyns were, from decency, obliged to unite ; and went so far in dissimulation, as to demand congratulations to themselves for the miraculous—so they termed it—recovery of the long lamented friends, though every one who heard them, ridiculed the farce they so awkwardly acted.

Miss Wilmot still continued with Miss
Blenheim,

Blenheim, who went by the appellation of that lady's companion ; in which quality, she assisted to receive the visitors of her mother, and was soon the universal theme of the neighbourhood—her beauty, manner, and understanding being allowed to be superior to that of every other female in Ivetsey. The fame of her perfections reached Beech Grove, and drove the owners almost to madness. With inconceivable impatience they listened to hear of Miss Wilmot's return to the Lodge ; not doubting but her *waiting-maid* would accompany her thither, and *then*—let what would be the consequence—they resolved to secure the person of *the detestable girl*.

When they heard that Miss Wilmot *had* returned to the Lodge, and that *the detestable girl* continued at the Tower, a thousand fears beset them, and a thousand conjectures arose, followed each other, and vanished ; for not one was founded upon even probability. Impatient to know the reason for this *amazing* incident, Fanny, who

who had spent the preceding day at the Cottage, was dispatched, upon a motion of her own, to Ivy Tower, on a frivolous message respecting some little cabinet, which Mrs. Selwyn requested Mrs. Blenheim would permit the messenger to examine, on the pretended account of the loss of a favourite locket.

Fanny, besides the opportunity of seeing Mr. Veerman, was truly delighted to spend some time with Miss Blenheim, and to gratify Horace Congreve by the relation of many little anecdotes respecting the fretfulness of the Selwyns, on account of the present situation of affairs, and their various conjectures relative to the Misses Selwyns and himself; as now they concluded, that the supposition of his having an attachment to Aurora was ill founded, because he was not, as they imagined, with her, they hesitated not to pronounce their having mistaken the object of his affection, and that it was *Sophia* with whom he was connected, and perhaps already married.

But

But where *they*, and *Emily*, and *Selina*, were secreted—and why Aurora Blenheim *was not with them*—was a mystery unfathomable.

When Fanny returned, Mrs. Selwyn said, “Well, girl, what news do you bring from the Tower?”

“News, Madam ! Lord bless me ! Why, I hardly dare say what news. For what do you think, Madam ?—but it must all be a wicked story !—for they say—I protest I am almost afraid to tell your Ladyship, it will so surprise you ; and I know you do not love to be surprised—but they *do* say that Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim have *found a daughter*.

CHAP. XX.

The Effect of three Words.

FOUND A DAUGHTER !!!

It was ten minutes after Fanny had spoken the words, that the almost petrified Mrs. Selwyn repeated them in an accent expressive of a passion—or rather of a combination of passions—for which we neither know, nor can coin, any adequate appellation.

Nor the pen of Fielding—nor the pencil of Hogarth—nor the most creative imagination, can give in colours, sufficiently

VOL. II. M vivifying,

vivifying, the attitude of more than amazement, into which the words—“*found a daughter*”—transported Mrs. Selwyn.

CHAP. XXI.

The Annunciation of Miss Blenheim at Becch Grove.—Consequent Regulations.—And she would not be a GRANDMOTHER.

DESPAIRING to effect our purpose, and ashamed of our poverty of language, we hastily drew a line, and cut short the chapter.

And still we find ourselves unequal to the subject. Had Mrs. Selwyn talked, *we* could

could talk—we could repeat what she said. But another ten minutes elapsed after her repetition of—FOUND *a daughter* ! ere she spake another syllable. Then in a tone, as if she had collected all her breath to aspirate the sentence—*Creature* ! what *is it* you mean ! ! !” And after a moment’s pause—
“ How *dare* you talk such stuff to me !”

“ I am sure, Madam,” said Fanny, with unaffected alarm at the more than even expected violence of her tone and manner ; “ I am sure I only tell you——”

“ *You* tell me !” fiercely interrogated Mrs. Selwyn. “ How, let me again ask, *dare* you tell me *anything* ? Get out of my sight this instant !”

Fanny did not stay to be twice bidden be gone. Glad to escape her fury, she hastened out of the room, and presently after, saw her lady fly down stairs to her husband and son, who were in the library, where she heard a violent uproar and a confusion of tongues, amidst which she could only sometimes catch a few disjointed

phrases, such as—“ *The devil was in you, when—*” “ *Are you mad? Or would you destroy—*” “ *You contrived! Oh, yes! and a fine hand you made—*” “ *May curses light upon me, if ever—*” “ *D-mn-t-n seize the wretch who first—*”

These, and other still more horrible expressions, assailed her ears all the time she staid in the hall, into which the library opened; but apprehensive of destruction, should they catch her in that spot, she went up to her own apartment, and heard no more till she was summoned to attend her lady, who was in fits.

Compassion for the distress she had occasioned, made Fanny repent having consented to carry the intelligence; yet when she considered her motive, she was reconciled to the office she had accepted, and determined to go through with the task; though she foresaw it might be more painful than she had expected.

But to spare ourselves the irksome detail, suffice it, that after other preparation,

Justice

Justice Wilmot, accompanied by Sir James Maynard, waited upon Mr. Selwyn, and acquainted him with—the continued existence of *Mr. Veerman*—with the particulars of the confession, as far as it respected *Aurora*, which he had made before him upon oath—and with the lenity of *Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim*, in wishing a private adjustment of the business, if *Mr. Selwyn* would consent to such arrangements as he (*Justice Wilmot*) and *Sir James Maynard*, should propose.

Violent was the conflict, and long the contesting debate, before the inhabitants of *Beech Grove* were brought to acknowledge the circumstances alledged against them; but finding the tide of evidence too strong to be withstood, they, at length, haughtily and sullenly gave a kind of *implicative* consent to what the mediators demanded; the alternative being a regular process in a court of chancery, to establish the identity of *Aurora Blenheim*—her title to the estate left to her mother by the late

Mr. Hayes—and her right to make a will of the reversionary property, upon arrival at the age of twenty-one, according to the established law of these realms, as well as to the will of the bequeather.

Rather than be exposed to all the world, and to live without character—rather than be obliged to refund, not only the principal sums received in the absence of their abused relations, and to pay, to the utmost farthing, the accumulated interest, but to be even then liable to prosecution for being not only privy, but the positive instigators, to the *theft* of the child, &c. &c. they signed all the papers laid before them by the Justice, that were deemed requisite to secure the inheritance of the Ivy Tower estates to Aurora Blenheim, long known in the world, through a series of extraordinary incidents, by the name of Lavinia Rosemont, &c.; and to her heirs, executors, or assigns: in consequence of which compliance, Mr. Blenheim made the terms as easy to the Selwyns, as justice to himself,

himself, and to his wife and daughter, could authorise.

After the settlement of this business, that of the Congreves came upon the tapis.

Mr. Selwyn was astonished at the knowledge exhibited by his Worship, of the affairs of these young gentlemen.

Delicacy was now unavoidably banished the conference, and Mr. Wilmot—not with the promptitude of insensibility—was necessitated to display the extent of his information, both with respect to the affairs of the Congreves and the Misses Selwyn; all of whom, he plainly told the now indignant gentleman, were under the protection and guardianship of Mr. Blenheim, the Baronet, and himself; and that, moreover, it was determined Horace Congreve should marry Aurora Blenheim, and Ferdinand be united to Miss Selwyn—Selina Rosemont and Emily, to reside sometimes with one, sometimes with another family of their friends, as would be most agreeable to all parties; it being

M 4

presumed

presumed that, after these arrangements, it would not be productive of harmony, for the young lady, last named, to reside constantly with her parents.

“And so, Sir,” said Selwyn, with impolitical haughtiness—forgetful in that moment of his ticklish situation, “you have, amongst you, cleverly contrived to ease Mrs. Selwyn and myself from the important care of disposing of our daughters! But know, Mr. Wilmot,” with an increase of haughtiness he spake—“that my children shall obey *my* voice, and not that of any new guardians, in opposition to my command. I positively forbid either of the girls to dispose of themselves, in any way, without my absolute direction.”

“Take care, Sir,” said Mr. Wilmot, with a cool severity which the circumstances demanded—“take care how you provoke me, by any new act of injustice, to exercise the power with which you cannot but know I am invested. When parents are dishonest to their children—you oblige me
to

to speak with explicitness—the children become the care of the public, and *your* daughters shall be *my* care, so long as they stand in need of protection. They ask not—they want not—any thing from you but JUSTICE; and that they *shall* have, as far as it can be procured for them by the laws of England.”

Mr. Wilmot, the lines in whose countenance gave an examiner to read SUAVITY and BENEVOLENCE, could thereon imprint—whenever it was requisite—JUSTICE and SEVERITY, in characters no less legible, now appeared so terrific to the conscience-humbled Selwyn, and his usually pert son, that he could not ask what either would refuse; yet ashamed of his degradation, Mr. Selwyn submissively contended for his right, to govern his daughters in the important article of marriage.

“No, Sir,” replied his Worship, “not in that arduous affair, do I allow a parent’s right to *govern* children of either sex, when they are grown up to the years of

M 5

discretion

discretion at which your's are arrived, and have made so commendable a choice as that of Miss Selwyn. The right to advise—to remonstrate—to reprove, is *always* in a parent; and he who neglects this office, neglects a positive duty; but to be despotic—to dispose of, and that for life, whether in marriage, or in a monastery, either a son or a daughter, is an assumption that nature never intended to allow, and which reason disapproves. And now, Mr. Selwyn, harsh as you may deem the question, let me ask if you have so conducted yourself, as to be entitled to a daughter's confidence and obedience?"

Selwyn was silent and sullen. His wife, when she was made acquainted with the substance of the debate, was absolutely rageful. Would *she* endure to see a parcel of brats produced, which should brand her with the odious appellation of GRAND-MOTHER? No, indeed! she would sooner leave the *country* than live to be so disgraced! Nay, *she would sooner suffer death,*
This

This business was a subject of sharp dispute; but when Mr. Selwyn farther considered Mr. Wilmot's ample knowledge of the affairs relative to the legacy, which had been given to his daughters by the will of Mrs. Marchmont, as well as of the circumstances of the deceased Mrs. Congreve, by means of Veerman, he saw absolute ruin to himself and his house in a refusal to comply with the demands of Mr. Wilmot; which, moreover, his conscience more than *whispered* him, were those of simple justice.

Determined, therefore, to avert, if possible, the impending destruction, he staid not to consult any farther with either wife or son, but bound himself to comply with every requisition of Mr. Wilmot's, and desired Sir James Maynard to witness his engagement, which was afterwards ratified by every legal measure; and three gentlemen, who had been nominated for the office, were the declared guardians, trustees, &c. to Messieurs Congreve, and the Misses

Selwyn, who soon after appeared openly at Ivy Tower; and Aurora Blenheim was presented to the world, as the recovered daughter and heiress of the gentleman and lady of that name, and was presented and accepted as such at the English court; private information having been previously given to the Sovereign, of the transactions with which the reader has been made acquainted.

The history of Miss Blenheim was whispered in many private parties, but no one dare publicly talk of the circumstances, as the abused parties discouraged all curiosity; but the character of the Selwyns—the peculiarity of their situation with respect to Ivy Tower—the little intimacy which now subsisted between the families, with a train of *et ceteras*, so corroborated floating suspicions, that a considerable part of the truth was given as a certainty by the news-carriers of the times; though they had no better authority than the voice of rumour.

Mr.

Mr. Veerman, against whom the Selwyns vowed private revenge, which they never could render effectual, occupied a farm of Mr. Blenheim's, and lived with Fanny Hood, to whom he was soon married, a tranquil and honest life; never after meeting with one of the Selwyns, who, during the short period they spent at Beech Grove in the summer season—London being their principal and favourite place of residence—seldom made visits, or received company; and, at length, were so disgusted with the situation, that they sold the estate, and purchased a retirement in the Isle of Wight.

After the instauration of the family of the Blenheims, the face of affairs, in the parish of Ivetsey, wore an aspect totally different to that which pervaded the country during the lordship of the Selwyns; so truly verified was the observation, that the manners of those who are termed—and who, from their situation, are bound

to deserve to be termed—*the Great*, affect the conduct of the small.

Under the auspices of the Blenheims, virtue appeared unmasked. Lovely in herself, and countenanced by those in power, she walked smiling through the vicinity, and enlivened every individual with her own native beams of complacency. Vice was abashed, and fled the neighbourhood. Deprived of her abettors, she was too cowardly to face her brilliant competitor, whom she skulked into corners to avoid encountering.

While the Selwyns presided, she vaunted over the “humble and meek,” and varying her form with the hour, assumed, in turn, all the different appearances in which she gloried, and under which she scattered destruction and occasioned devastation through the unfortunate country. Hail, happy change! Hail, days of real gladness!

The sprightly song and the dance, led on by Innocence and guarded by Discretion,
enliven

enliven the district where Virtue presides. No artificial austerity worn as a masquerade habit, by those of manners most depraved—no assumption of prudence to screen levity of soul—no sanctity of speech to disguise sentiments of a nature too gross to be named—or severity of countenance to veil an iniquitous mind, disgraced the plains of Ivetysey.

All, within a short space after the change of possessors, was peace and harmony. The neighbourhood was united by social ties. New habits were acquired, and, in process of time, similarity of sentiment prevailed with both sexes and all ages.

By the unremitted diligence and spirited exertions of the guardians, the affairs of the Congreves were soon clear and flourishing. The law and Ferdinand would have given the estate to Horatio. The guardians would have divided it between them; but Horatio, in consequence of his approaching union with the fair Aurora, with not only the consent, but high approbation

approbation of the Blenheims, insisted upon its being vested in Ferdinand, who would not, till after a strong debate with his brother, agree to that regulation. The moiety of the personal property, which was considerable, Horace, unhesitatingly accepted, as Ferdinand, upon his marriage with Miss Selwyn, would, in her right, receive Mrs. Marchmont's legacy of ten thousand pounds; both Sophia and Emily being of the stipulated age, to demand its payment into the hands of their elected guardians.

A genteel fortune was settled upon Selina, the foster-sister of Aurora, by Mr. Blenheim; and rewards highly liberal made to Mr. and Mrs. Veerman, for the parts they had both, of late, acted towards the once suffering family of friends at Ivy Tower.

Our WOODLAND WITCHES were now held in much estimation by all who knew them. Countenanced and respected by Mr. Wilmot and the Blenheims, they needed no other

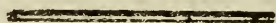
other recommendation to the inhabitants of Ivetsey.

That the people in the vicinity might not be misled by a belief in their ingenious and truly wonderful exhibitions, Mr. Wilmot advised a full display of the powers by which they performed their apparent prodigies; this was readily made to the amusement of the surrounding gentry, who now flocked in parties to see the wonders of the Woodland Cottage, which was rendered one of the prettiest rural spots in the kingdom by Horace Congreve, who settled a comfortable annuity upon the sisters, with a reversion to Anna.

This retirement was often visited by our social friends, who used to amuse themselves with the mechanism of the puppets; and Emily Selwyn, whose eccentric humour was always diverting, declared she would bind herself apprentice to Mrs. Mervin to learn ventriloquism, with the powers of which, she often averred, she thought herself

herself already possessed, and that she was only deficient in practical knowledge.

The felicity which was now enjoyed by the inhabitants of Ivetsey, in rural sports and entertainments by the young, and in friendly visitings by the adult, is only to be completely depicted in the imagination of those who have lived in such truly charming—such harmonic society.



CHAP. XXII.

The Marriages of the Nuns-elect.—And HOME.

A FEW days previous to the period which was fixed upon for the completion of the happiness of Horatio and Ferdinand Congreve,

Congreve, and we hope, without offence to female delicacy, we may say, and likewise of that of Miss Blenheim and Miss Selwyn, Mr. Wilmot waited upon the family at Beech Grove, who were but just returned from London, to inform them of the intended ceremony, and to invite them to the nuptial entertainment.

Mrs. Selwyn, who never, since the *dénouement*, could be prevailed upon to see either of her daughters, flew into an indecent rage, both upon the circumstance itself, and, what she termed, the affrontive invitation.

Mr. Selwyn, though more guarded, was equally bitter in his expressions of refusal; and William—the politic William—was perfectly ready to follow the example of his father and mother, or to obey their commands.

“My example and commands, young man,” replied she, “are exactly the same—and they consist in this—that you never henceforward hold any correspondence
with

with the disobedient wretches who call themselves your sisters, but who, I verily believe, were changed by their nurses."

Mr. Selwyn accorded with his wife, William with his father; and the result of Mr. Wilmot's Christian-like arguments, was the speedy return of the trio to the metropolis.

At five the next morning, the whole family left Beech Grove, where subsequently they were seldom seen; Mrs. Selwyn saying, she hated the sight of married infants, and that nothing could ever reconcile her to the sound of the word daughter, but the view of both her's through the grate of a monastery; nor would she, under any other circumstance, acknowledge herself to be their mother.

This passionate and virulent protestation silenced the secret reproaches of the dutiful Sophia, and most perfectly reconciled her to all the measures that had been taken; against which, the undeviating goodness of her heart sometimes almost revolted: "But now,"

now," said she, without one self-upbraiding sigh—"now the conflict is over, and I deem myself no one's but your's," giving her hand with a tender graceful air to Ferdinand Congreve, who, with the most affectionate gratitude, received and pressed it to his lips, and to his heart.

Will any parents, who shall condescend to read these pages, condemn us for giving too much allowance for the disobedience of daughters to the authors of their being?

Will they persist in an opinion, that no errors in either father or mother can absolve a child from what they term their duty—unlimited submission to all their mandates, however unreasonable?

Greatly as we reverence parental authority, and much as we are charmed by instances of filial affection, we cannot agree to there being no exception to a compliance with a parent's injunction, which, it is possible, may militate against *duty to ourselves*, to a *friend*, to *society*, and even to OUR MAKER!

Say

Say then, ye casuists in rectitude, is a child to break a law divine, or even human, because a parent so commands?

Are there not cases in which compliance would be criminal?

There are; yet still, perhaps, nine times in ten, it is safer to obey, than to rebel against a parent's edict.

But who will say, that Sophia and Emily Selwyn were bound by any right, or rule of rectitude, to seclude themselves forever from the world, and drag on a solitary, useless, wretched existence?

No one, who can judge with equity and candour; consequently, no one whose opinion is estimable. Yet still did the heart of Sophia wish to reconcile her duties, and sigh for the favour of her father and her mother; while Emily, provoked at the treatment they had ever received, declared, that though she should be happy to do them, and her brother, all possible service, she was glad they were not likely to reside much at Beech Grove.

Three

Three days after the departure of the Selwyns, the parish of Ivetsey commenced a scene of joy.

Early in the morning the inhabitants of Ivy Tower were awakened by a band of martial music—a science in which every individual within its walls particularly delighted.

“Eliza,” said Mrs. Blenheim, who was first awake, “this day will, I trust, secure the happiness of our beloved child, by giving her to a man who is, in every respect, truly estimable.”

“He is, indeed,” she replied; “and my heart beats with gratitude for her having found one who can so duly appreciate her excellence. Sophia, too—dear orphan-girl! I am nearly as much interested for her as for Aurora.”

“Indeed so am I. I feel myself as her father: and as to the brothers, it is impossible to say which deserves the preference,” was the reply of Mr. Blenheim to his lady, as he was dressing.

With

With hearts of affectionate solicitude they entered the breakfast-room, where they found Horace and Ferdinand Congreve, talking to each other, with an appearance of more than mortal joy, which received addition by their presence; and soon after Mr. and Miss Wilmot, attended by Sir James Maynard, were driven to the door.

“Where are my children?” asked his Worship, as he entered the room. “Is any body ready to be married?”

“*I am,*” said Ferdinand. “Brother, answer for yourself.”

Horatio, likewise, pronounced a hearty affirmative; and, at that instant, the door gave way to the hand of Emily Selwyn, introducing the two brides elect, who were followed by Selina Rosemont.

The most cordial salutations went round the room. Every countenance exhibited expressive marks of felicity.

No reserve—no affectation disgraced the occasion, though both Miss Blenheim and
Miss

Miss Selwyn were less gay than the rest of the company.

Emily, who was in *tip top* spirits, made an offer of her hand to the Justice, which he refused; and the scene was enlivened by her mock courtship.

Selina seemed to have borrowed some of Emily's spirits, and Miss Wilmot exceeded her usual gaiety.

The Baronet wished her having increased the number of the brides, and whispered his wishes to the Justice, who most warmly united in his sentiments, and bid him not despair.

The brothers were animated beyond any other in the company. Each was happy in himself, and each enjoyed the happiness of the other, which swelled "their sum of Good" to an incalculable amount, for the line of their arithmetic extended beyond the stars; their principles leading them to believe that the account would keep increasing through Eternal Ages.

But, hush ! good Lady Clio, hush ! Do not expose your heroes to derision. Consider the refinement of the nineteenth century ! How, *outré*——how absolutely Gothic would these really elegant young men, thus depicted, appear in polished society. Paint them as *bucks—bloods—dashers*, if you would render them admired by our spirited young women. Dress them in any garb but that of sobriety——old fashioned trumpery ! fit only for old fashioned people. As to religion and piety—if we *cannot* divest them of such disguises, we must intimate that they are as masquerade habits, only put on for fun and frolic. Do not let us spoil their characters by painting their *goodness*.

None, perhaps, in our bridal assembly, were more truly blest than Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim : the dark colouring of their distresses, in the back ground of the scene, throwing such a cluster of rays on the prospect in more immediate view,
that

that they were almost dazzled by its brightness.

It was to them—and indeed to all the friendly society—a most lovely presentation of terrestrial delights.

Felicity herself, seemed to sit enthroned amongst them, and to infuse her own spirit into their hearts, the beams from which illumined every countenance.

After breakfast was over, the seniors moved for the approach of the carriages; and now our two heroines, in spite of their acknowledged affection for their destined partners—in spite of their summoned fortitude, and total destitution of affectation, could not suppress the appearance of a little fluttering sensibility, at the approach of a ceremony that must fix the colour of their fate throughout this scene of their existence. Yet *why* did they tremble?

Nothing in this state is certain; but according to all human probability, their happiness was secured. This they believed, and collecting a proper *quantum*

of presence of mind, sufficient to keep them at due distances from a masculine unblushing appearance, and a too trembling timidity, though the latter rather prevailed, they suffered themselves to be conducted into the first coach, by the happy brothers.

In the second was conveyed, Miss Wilmot, Miss Rosemont, Emily Selwyn, and Sir James Maynard.

In the third, Mr. and Mrs. Blenheim, with Mr. Justice Wilmot, who officiated as Sophia's nuptial father; Mr. Blenheim presenting, to the enraptured Horace Congreve, the hand of his beloved daughter.

The ceremony ended, the company were driven, in the order they went, to the skirts of the forest surrounding the Woodland Cottage; at which they alighted, and walked to the brow of the hill, where they were met by Mr. and Mrs. Veerman, who were invited to partake of an entertainment, which had been ordered by Mrs. Blenheim, in honour of the marriages.

As

As soon as the company was perceived by Mrs. Mervin, she pulled the cord of the Convent bell, and in ten minutes Martha Hood appeared to congratulate the happy parties ; but she staid not long, as she was apprehensive of being missed from her post, though she had stationed therein one on whom she could depend.

Desirous to remunerate many kind offices, which our Runaways had received from Father Clement *the Good*, they agreed to send him a hamper of rich and spicy wine, which Sister Martha intimated to him was a present from the brides.

The kind Priest was highly gratified by the affectionate remembrance, drank to their lasting happiness in a large glass of fine old sack, and gave them a nuptial benediction, which was transmitted by the Portress, and received with delight by our intended NUNS OF THE DESERT, who were now amongst the most blest of their sex. Leaving the Cottage, they returned to the

Tower, amidst the acclamations of a joyful populace, to whom Mr. Blenheim was liberal to almost excess.

The neighbouring gentry paid their early compliments to the happy couples, who both continued at Ivy Tower; nor would they consent to be separated, till Mr. Selwyn proposed to part with the estate of Beech Grove, which Ferdinand Congreve purchased for his future residence; though even after that regulation, the two families seldom made but one, which sometimes occupied the Grove, sometimes the Tower.

The harmony which reigned amidst our favourite friends, was never exceeded, but upon the plains of Arcadia; and even that, in some respects it rivalled. Groves—gardens—pleasure-grounds, to an immense extent, were the scenes in which they experienced almost the bliss of angels.

One of their highest delights proceeded
from

from the ample means they possessed of comforting and relieving those, whose afflictions required the *secretly-applied* balm of benevolence. These, they frequently conducted into the almost sacred retirements which surrounded their habitation, that their situation might not be exposed to the prying eye of happier visitants.

Our gay friends will enquire, if the young people entirely absconded from plays, balls, routs, drums, hurricanes, &c.

No; they sometimes sacrificed their inclination to remain at home, by going, to promote good neighbourhood, to places of private and public resort; and when music was the entertainment, they thought themselves rewarded for their trouble, for their souls were harmony.

But HOME, was the scene of their supremest delight. At *home*, they enjoyed the purest and most fervent friendship. At *home*, they constituted the happiness of those they best loved. At *home*, they were

constant in the exercise of every Christian Virtue. Consequently, at *home*, they experienced all that is desirable on this side Heaven.

Harken to my solicitation, O ! thou who art endued with Wealth—with Power—with Ability, in any form, to ameliorate the destiny of those whose lot is harder than thy own—hearken, and pursue thy own best interest, by purchasing an ever-increasing property in those funds which will yield thee more than a hundred thousand fold.

Buy with thy Gold—with an ore that will soon be useless—an everlasting-life-estate in Regions of undecaying Glory and unceasing Bliss.

With thy perishable, secure an *un*-perishable inheritance.

With thy superfluous property, bid for that which will be found inestimable.

If thou art pleased with characters, that have been represented as dispensing, *with*
a second

a second hand, the return of health—of comfort—of peace—of competence—to those who, by the severity of fortune, have been deprived of those blessings of life—

If thy heart approves the benevolence of others—If thou seest the beauty of their practice, and deemest their reward valuable—then, if thou art invested with manners to console—with wisdom to advise—with wealth to relieve—with power to redress—*then* put thy talents to the use for which they were given, and as thou admirest the examples of the Friendly—the Social—the Benevolent—the Generous—the Charitable—THE VIRTUOUS—

“GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE.”

Then, my friend, shalt thou be beloved by all the Good of all degrees. *Then* shalt thou secure the favour of thy Creator, whose favour alone is happiness. *Then* shalt thou assuredly have peace at the last.

And THEN—of whatever persuasion thou art—to whatever country thou belongest—shalt thou, when thy mortal eyes shall close, be received into the Regions of Harmony ; and be accepted of HIM—

“ WHO CALLED THEE INTO BEING TO BE BLEST ! ”

ADDENDA.

ADDENDA.



TO THE REV. WILLIAM JONES.



SIR,

YOUR early return of my manuscript has much obliged me, as I mean to send it to my printer without delay. I, moreover, thank you for your permission, of answering publicly the remarks you made upon the performance. Of this liberty, I shall, *in part*, avail myself, as I should be sorry to lead aside the mind of any young reader, by not explaining what a *cursory* peruser

may pronounce to be an attestation of a falsity. To exemplify my meaning, turn to the eighth chapter, Vol. I. page 88.—“ You are very cross,” *said the bird*, may be deemed a reprehensible untruth; but this, it is to be supposed, was one of the few phrases that the bird *had been taught*, and which he frequently repeated when he was chidden; which those who are conversant with this species of bird, will know is far from being any thing extraordinary. When the words proceeded from the *Ventriloquist*, the expression of—“ *said the bird*, or, *the monkey, &c.*,” is avoided.

In the same chapter, page 91—“ *Margaret stood aghast, but moved not her lips to utter a syllable, save, in a peremptory tone, the word BRIMO.*”

Those who have seen, or read of perfect ventriloquists, very well know, that when they throw their voice from them—that is to say, when they speak according to art, their lips are motionless. When she called BRIMO, she spake as from herself.

The avidity with which young people, and perhaps some who ought to check their juniors from indulging in this worse than folly, flock to *hear their fortune told*, is often productive of even bad consequence. Impressed with an idea, that they are, by marriage, to be raised to an elevated sphere, they look down with contempt upon an equal offer, and are in continual expectation of the appearance of the predicted lover. It seems, therefore, to me to be perfectly requisite that the arcana of the science of fortune-telling should be displayed; as though every woman who is celebrated by the appellation of CUNNING, is not a ventriloquist, yet the management of machinery—the tricks of confederates—the knowledge gained in the neighbourhood, or gleaned from servants, so surprise and impress an unexperienced mind, that an exposure of the deceptions practised by fortune-tellers, is a duty indispensable from those who are empowered to warn the unwary of the mischiefs

mischiefs arising from a dependance on the augury of pretenders to a foreknowledge of human destiny.

This is the principle scope of the preceding pages; for which reason, it is incumbent upon me to elucidate every apparent violation of perfect verity, and to develope every fold that inwraps probability..

The cavity, which, in the first chapter, page 3, is said to have opened itself at the base of the *Ninth Tower*, is little more of a phænomenon than what I myself have seen in this kingdom.

In the farm-yard of a respectable yeoman, of the name of Till, formerly a resident of Hoo Hall, near the seat of the Earl of Rochford, in the county of Suffolk, was a cavity similar to that which, in the preceding pages, has been given to the NINTH TOWER. Its mouth was not more than an inch and half in diameter; its situation, within a yard of a pump. At the approach of fine weather, it drew
into

into it, with a kind of whistling noise, all the feathers, pieces of wool, and light rubbish, within a considerable distance; and previous to a storm, it cleared the ground around its orifice, of even the loose sand which accidentally had there been strewed; at which time, its roarings were so unpleasant, that Mr. Till determined to stop it; but no sooner was it closed, than the suppressed air forced itself through the ground, at about the distance of a yard, with such an explosion, that Mr. Till, fearful, as he said, that it would blow up the pump, opened the first aperture, which he surrounded with a fillet of lead; and no other barometer was ever required by the master of the premises, for the cavity never failed in the truth of its prognostics.

Philosophers will give a ready solution to this phænomenon, for which I do not pretend to account: If I were to venture upon *any* suggestion, it would be, that in moist weather, the circumambient air is so
much

much lighter than the subterraneous, that it rushes from the cavity with unimpeded velocity; and *vice versa*, when the exterior element is strong, it compresses the unresisting air within, and carries with it all the light bodies that surround the aperture.

As it is some years since I was in the neighbourhood of Hoo Hall, I know not whether this natural barometer still exists, or whether its powers have been either weakened, or destroyed, by means of any accidental or intended ventiduct.

In the seventh chapter, Vol. I. is a description of the furniture of the Woodland Cottage: this will be judged to have been extraordinary, till it be considered that it was the property of a professed necromancer; to whom also belonged the puppets, the other machinery, and the well-taught animals; none of the last so improbable, nor so wonderful as either the *learned pig*, or the *learned goose*, nor even as the *knowing little horse*; all of which
were,

were, a few years back, carried round this island as *raree-shows*, though not in a box, for the amusement of children of *all ages*.

With regard to the change of scenes, the turning and sudden disappearance of sword, &c. it is unnecessary to observe, that the assistants must be supposed to have been behind the painted canvass; through which, likewise, they might easily see all the well-known signals of *the Witch*, and hear her voice.

In chapter VIII. page 99, in the first volume, some observations may be made upon the circumstance of the figure, named Fatima, turning its head to the necromantic table *so opportunely*; but it ought to be considered, that the supposed Witch adapted *her* conversation to the known motions of the puppet: for which reason there was a clock with an unusually large dial-plate, on which she often turned her eye, given to the opposite side of the room.

In chapter IX., page 109, the Witch is said to pause some moments, to give time,
as

as may be conjectured, for the movements of the puppets to accord with her commands.

There are several minute circumstances, to which those who are determined to cavil at *something*, may possibly object; but I will venture to repeat your words, that there is not, I trust, one line which an impartial perusal, and a candid criticism, will not sufficiently elucidate, as to what respects—not only the *possible*, but the *probable*.

A young lady-criticiser on one of my former publications, objected to the badness of the bad characters, because, as she perhaps judged would be the inference, she was so very innocent, that, Colley Cibber-like, she could not believe there was such guile in the world. And yet she professes herself an enthusiastic admirer of the Avon bard, whose characters of Shylock, Iago, the Macbeths, Richard, Aaron the Moor, Tamora, and various others, exceed the utmost—not only that I can delineate,

delineate, but even that I can imagine of vice and diabolical enterprize.

The generality of moral writers are, perhaps, more industrious to lash folly, which ought to be pitied, than that criminality, which demands abhorrence. Virtue, indeed, they decorate with every fancied ornament; but when they paint vice, they are sparing in colour.

Ventriloquism has, of late years, been more known than it was formerly; nevertheless, as many of my readers may not be acquainted with so completely, as to credit the wonders which are exhibited by its rare and extraordinary powers, I will annex some account of that gift of Nature, from writers whose authority is unquestionable.

Human vanity, from which, when writing to one who has so long known me, I dare not pretend to be exempt, incites me to reply to your congratulation on the more than even expected success on my *ESSAYS ON THE ART OF BEING HAPPY*. To evince, however,

however, that I am not destitute of modesty, I forbear copying your language, which is too partial for the eye of uninfluenced criticism. In compliance with your wishes, I have entered upon a similar work, which I shall pursue, as soon as I can despatch some other volumes, that I laid aside to complete these which I now present to my kind and generous readers, who have accepted the *intention* of my labours, without severely judging the execution. I have, in this United Kingdom, many brothers and sisters, whose pens have been exercised in the same cause. To every one I hold out the hand of fellowship; being convinced that, however we may differ in the mode of proceeding, our aim tends to the same point—that of preserving from the corruption of licentious times, the youth of the rising generation; an employment in which *you* have passed many years with such uninterrupted success, that nothing but the most invincible modesty could prevent your avowing
yourself

yourself the author of those volumes, which never met with a disapproving line from the severest criticism.

Accept, my dear Sir, with affectionate remembrances to your family, the very cordial regard of

your obliged friend,

and obedient servant,

EUGENIA DE ACTON.

VENTRILOQUISM.

VENTRILOQUISM.

“**V**ENTRILOQUOUS, **V**ENTRILOQUUS, compounded of *venter*, belly, and *loquor*, I speak, *gastriloquus*, or *engastrimythus*, a term applied to persons who speak inwardly; having a peculiar art of forming speech, by drawing the air into the lungs; so that the voice proceeding out of the thorax, to a bystander seems to come from some distance, or in any direction.

“ Such a person we had formerly in London, a smith by profession, who had the faculty in such perfection, that he could make his voice appear, now, as if it came out of the cellar, and the next minute,

minute, as if in an upper room, and nobody present could perceive that he spoke at all.

“ We cannot forbear making a few extracts from a work, published in 1772, entitled, ‘ *Le Ventriloque, &c.* or, the Ventriloquist, by M. de la Chapelle, Censor royal at Paris, Member of the Academies at Lyons and Rouen, and F. R. S.’ Some faint traces of the art or faculty of *ventriloquism* are to be found in the writings of the ancients; but many more are to be discovered there, if we adopt this writer’s opinion, that the responses of many of the ancient oracles were actually delivered by persons possessing this quality, so very capable of being applied to the purposes of priestcraft and delusion. The Abbé de la Chapelle, having heard many surprising circumstances related, concerning one M. St. Gille, a grocer at St. Germain-en-Laye, near Paris, whose powers as a *ventriloquist* had given occasion to many singular and diverting scenes, formed the
resolution

resolution of seeing him. Being seated with him on the opposite side of a parlour on the ground-floor, and very attentively observing him, the Abbé, after half an hour's conversation with M. St. Gille, heard himself called, on a sudden, by his name and title, in a voice that seemed to come from the roof of a house at a distance; and whilst he was pointing to the house from which the voice had appeared to him to proceed, he was yet more surprised at hearing the words "it was not from that quarter," apparently in the same kind of voice as before, but which now seemed to issue from under the earth at one corner of the room. In short, this factitious voice played, as it were, every where about him; and seemed to proceed from any quarter, or distance, from which the operator chose to transmit it to him. To the Abbé, though conscious that the voice proceeded from the mouth of St. Gille, he appeared absolutely mute while he was exercising this talent; nor could any change in his countenance

countenance be discovered. He observed, however, that St. Gille presented only the profile of his face to him, while he was speaking as a *ventriloquist*. On another occasion, M. St. Gille sought for shelter from a storm in a neighbouring convent; on finding the community in mourning, and enquiring the cause, he was told, that one of their body, much esteemed by them, had lately died. Some of the religious attended him to the church, and showing him the tomb of their deceased brother, spoke very feelingly of the scanty honours that had been bestowed on his memory; when, suddenly, a voice was heard, apparently proceeding from the roof of the choir, lamenting the situation of the defunct in purgatory, and reproaching the brotherhood with their want of zeal on his account. The whole community being afterwards convened into the church, the voice from the roof renewed its lamentations and reproaches; and the whole convent fell on their faces, and vowed a

solemn reparation. Accordingly, they first chaunted a *de profundis* in full choir, during the intervals of which, the ghost occasionally expressed the comfort he received from their pious exercises and ejaculations in his behalf. The prior, when this religious service was concluded, entered into a serious conversation with M. St. Gille, and inveighed against the absurd incredulity of our modern sceptics and pretended philosophers, on the article of ghosts and apparitions; and M. St. Gille found it difficult to convince the fathers that the whole was a ludicrous deception.

“ Another instance of his extraordinary powers occurred in presence of a large party, consisting of commissaries from the Royal Academies of Sciences at Paris, and other persons of the highest quality, together with a certain lady, who was not in the secret, and who was only told, that an aërial spirit had lately established itself in the forest of St. Germain-en-Laye; and that they were assembled to enquire into
the

the state of the fact. When the party sat down to dinner, the aërial spirit began to address the lady, with a voice that seemed to be in the air over their heads; sometimes he spoke to her from the trees around them, or from the surface of the ground at a great distance, and at other times, from a considerable depth under her feet. The lady, being thus addressed for more than two hours, was firmly persuaded that this was the voice of an aërial spirit; and it was some time before she was undeceived.

Several other instances of M. St. Gille's talents are related; and the Abbé, in the course of his inquiries, was informed that Baron de Mengen, a German nobleman, possessed this art in a very high degree. He also relates, from Brodeau, a learned critic in the sixteenth century, one of the singular feats of a capital *ventriloquist* in his time, who was called Louis Brabant, and was *valet de chambre* to Francis I. Our countryman, Dickenson, speaks of him particularly, in his tract, entitled,

'*Delphi Phœnicizantes*,' printed in duodecimo, at Oxford, 1655. Louis had fallen in love with a beautiful and rich heiress, but was objected by the parents as an unsuitable match on account of his low circumstances. However, the father dying, he visits the widow; and on his first appearance in the house, she hears herself accosted in a voice resembling that of her dead husband, and which seemed to proceed from above: "Give my daughter to Louis Brabant, who is a man of great fortune and excellent character. I now endure the inexpressible tortures of purgatory for having refused her to him; obey this admonition, and I shall soon be delivered; you will provide a worthy husband for your daughter, and procure everlasting repose to the soul of your poor husband." This dread summons, which had no appearance of proceeding from Louis, whose countenance exhibited no change, and whose lips were close and motionless, was instantly complied with;

but the deceiver, in order to mend his finances for the accomplishment of the marriage contract, applied to one Cornu, an old and rich banker at Lyons, who had accumulated immense wealth by usury and extortion, and was haunted by remorse of conscience. After some conversation on demons and spectres, the pains of purgatory, &c., during an interval of silence, a voice is heard like that of the banker's deceased father, complaining of his dreadful situation in purgatory, and calling upon him to rescue him from thence, by putting into the hands of Louis Brabant, then with him, a large sum for the redemption of Christians in slavery with the Turks; threatening him, at the same time, with eternal damnation if he did not thus expiate his own sins. Upon a second interview, in which his ears were saluted with the complaints and groans of his father, and of all his deceased relations, imploring him for the love of God, and in the name of every saint in the calendar, to
have

have mercy on his own soul and others. Cornu obeyed the heavenly voice, and gave Louis ten thousand crowns, with which he returned to Paris, and married his mistress. The miser, being afterwards undeceived, was so mortified, that he took to his bed and died."

* * * * *

"From Baron de Mengen's account of himself, and the observations made by M. de la Chapelle in his frequent examinations of M. St. Gille, it seems that the factitious voice produced by a *ventriloquist*, does not (as the etymology of the word imports) proceed from his belly, but is formed from the inner parts of the mouth and throat. The art, according to this author, does not depend upon a particular structure or organization of these parts, peculiar to a few individuals, and very rarely occurring, but may be acquired by almost any ardently desirous of attaining it,

it, and determined to persevere in repeated trials."

* * * * *

" ENGASTRIMYTHUS, or ENGASTRIMANDER, a person who speaks from, or with the belly, without opening his mouth; or, if open, without stirring the lips.

" The ancient philosophers, &c. are divided on the subject of the *engastrimuthi*: Hippocrates mentions it as a disease. Others will have it a kind of divination, and ascribe the origin and first discipline thereof to one Eurichus, whom nobody knows anything of. Others attribute it to the operation or possession of an evil spirit; and others, to art and mechanism.

" The most eminent *engastrimuthi* were the pythonesess or priestesses of Apollo, who delivered oracles from within, without any action of the mouth or lips.

" St. Chrysostom and Œcumenius make express mention of a sort of divine men, called

called by the Greeks *engastrimandi*, whose prophetic bellies pronounced oracles.

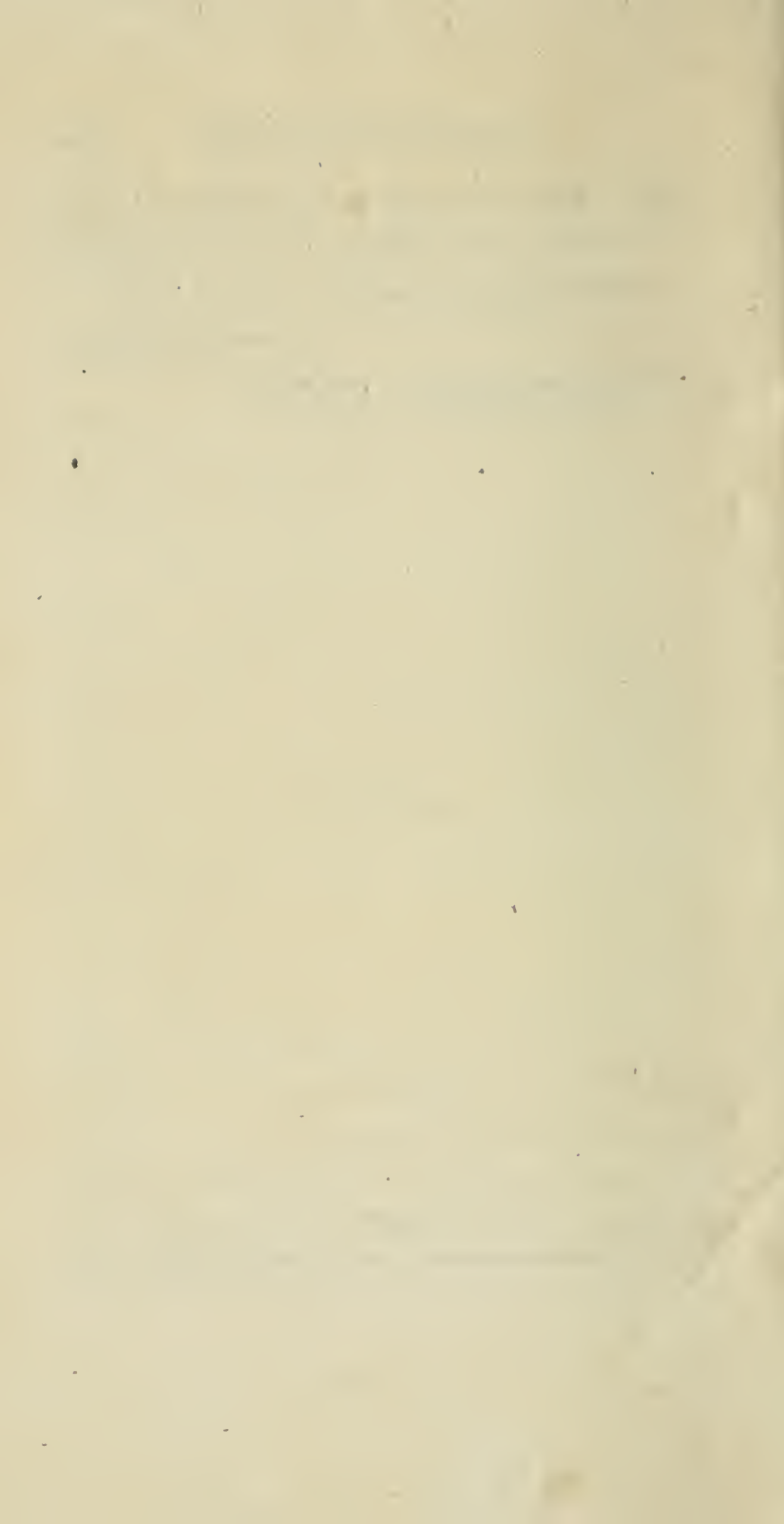
“Leo Allatius has an express treatise on the ENGATRIMUTHI.”

Chambers's Cyclopædia, by Rees.

F I N I S.

“(O)”

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